

Archie
ADVENTURE
SERIES

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SEGA[®]

KNUCKLES[™]

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CODE
AUTHORITY

THE ECHIDNA



**PENDERS • SPAZIANTE • GALAN
GROSSMAN • WILLIAMS • PEPOY**

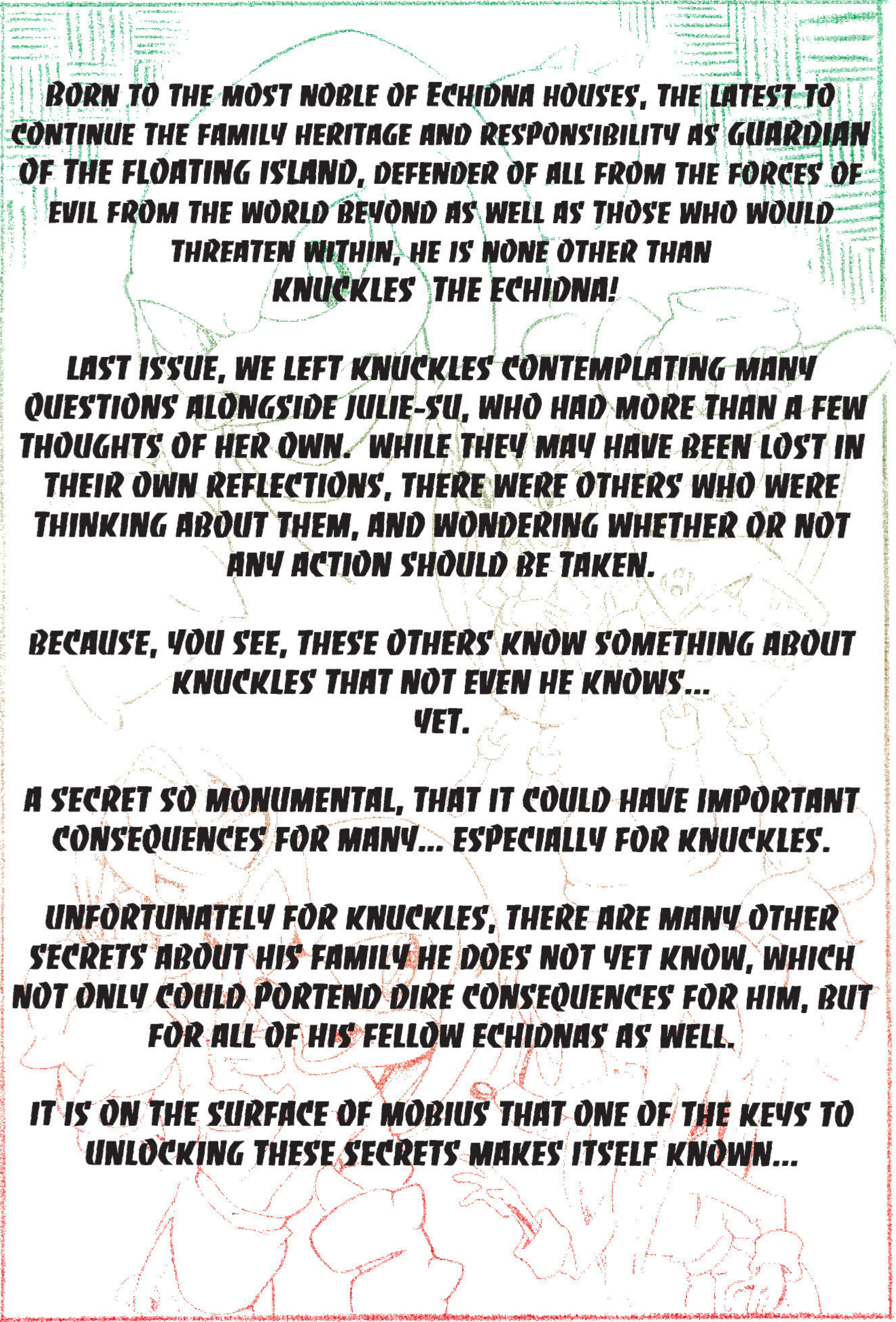


BOOK SEVENTEEN

DEEP COVER

PART ONE OF TWO

KEN PENDERS: WRITER MANNY GALAN: PENCILER ANDREW PEPOY: INKER
BARRY GROSSMAN: COLORIST VICKIE WILLIAMS: LETTERER
JUSTIN GABRIE: EDITOR VICTOR GORELICK: MANAGING EDITOR
RICHARD GOLDWATER: EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



BORN TO THE MOST NOBLE OF ECHIDNA HOUSES, THE LATEST TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY HERITAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS GUARDIAN OF THE FLOATING ISLAND, DEFENDER OF ALL FROM THE FORCES OF EVIL FROM THE WORLD BEYOND AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD THREATEN WITHIN, HE IS NONE OTHER THAN KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA!

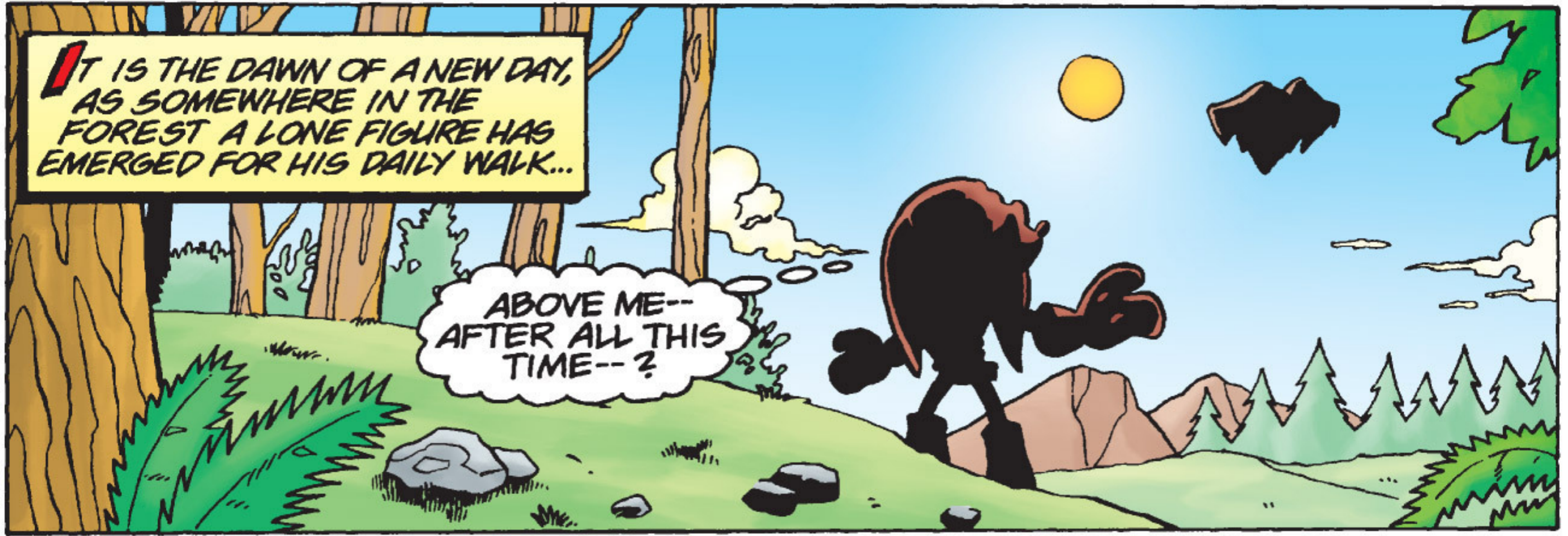
LAST ISSUE, WE LEFT KNUCKLES CONTEMPLATING MANY QUESTIONS ALONGSIDE JULIE-SU, WHO HAD MORE THAN A FEW THOUGHTS OF HER OWN. WHILE THEY MAY HAVE BEEN LOST IN THEIR OWN REFLECTIONS, THERE WERE OTHERS WHO WERE THINKING ABOUT THEM, AND WONDERING WHETHER OR NOT ANY ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN.

**BECAUSE, YOU SEE, THESE OTHERS KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT KNUCKLES THAT NOT EVEN HE KNOWS...
YET.**

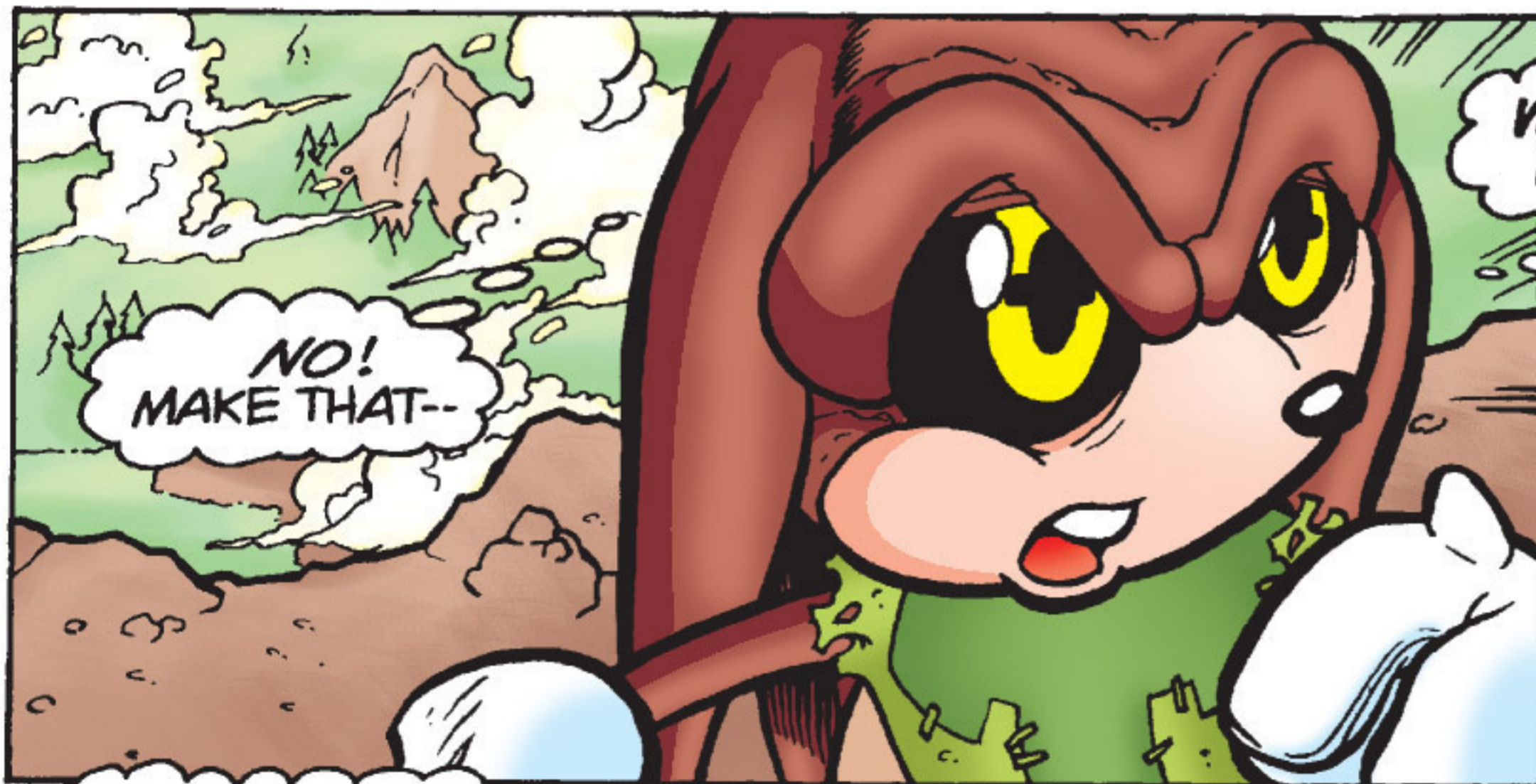
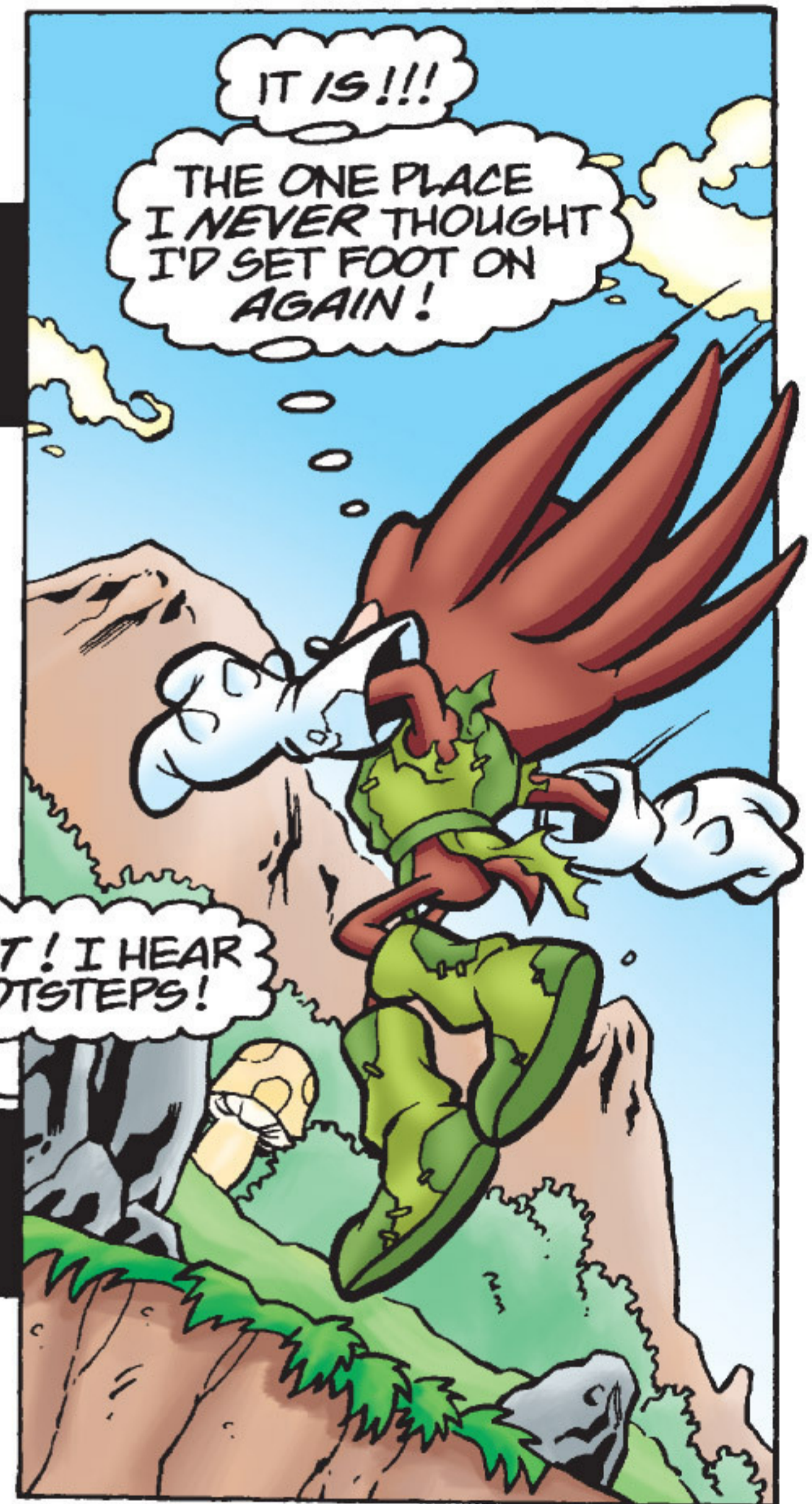
A SECRET SO MONUMENTAL, THAT IT COULD HAVE IMPORTANT CONSEQUENCES FOR MANY... ESPECIALLY FOR KNUCKLES.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR KNUCKLES, THERE ARE MANY OTHER SECRETS ABOUT HIS FAMILY HE DOES NOT YET KNOW, WHICH NOT ONLY COULD PORTEND DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR HIM, BUT FOR ALL OF HIS FELLOW ECHIDNAS AS WELL.

IT IS ON THE SURFACE OF MOBIUS THAT ONE OF THE KEYS TO UNLOCKING THESE SECRETS MAKES ITSELF KNOWN...

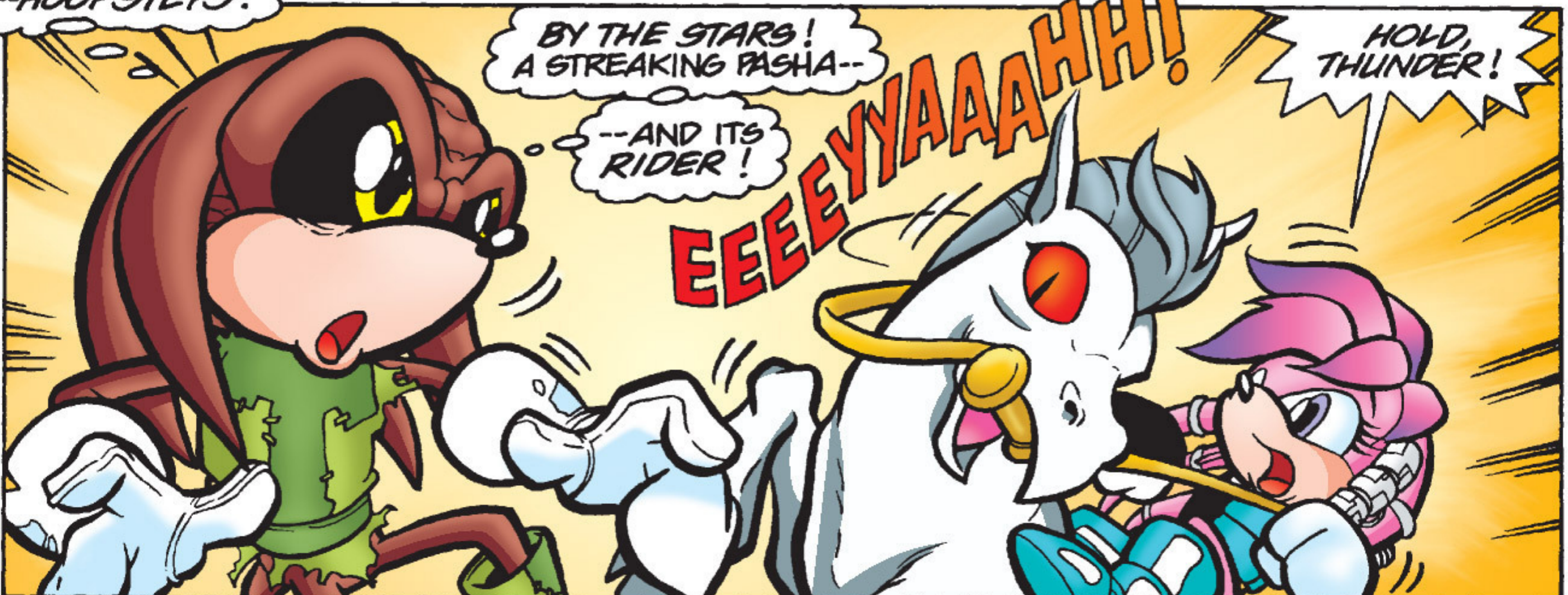


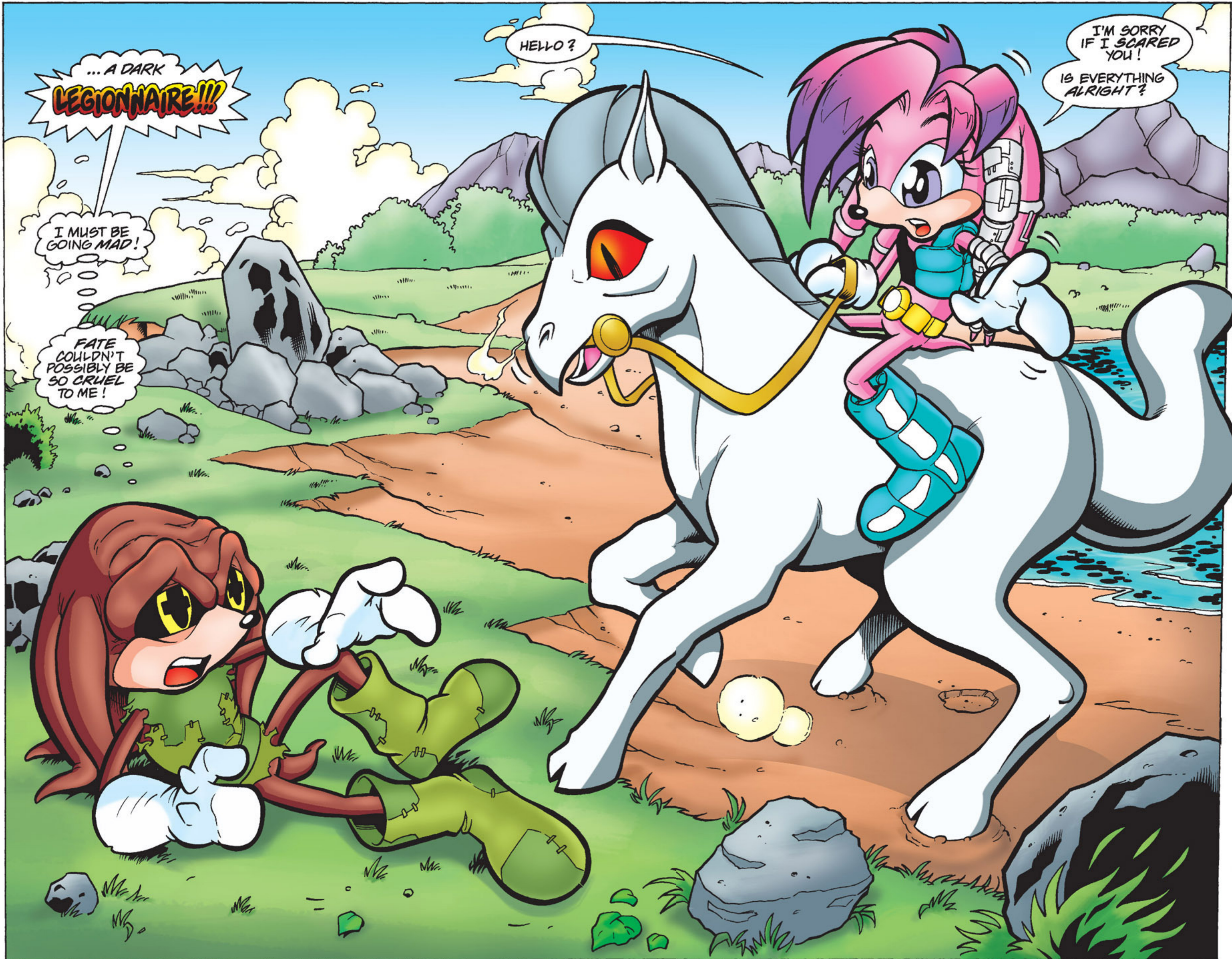
ABOVE ME--
AFTER ALL THIS
TIME--?



WAIT! I HEAR
FOOTSTEPS!

--HOOFSTEPS!





... A DARK
LEGIONNAIRE!!!

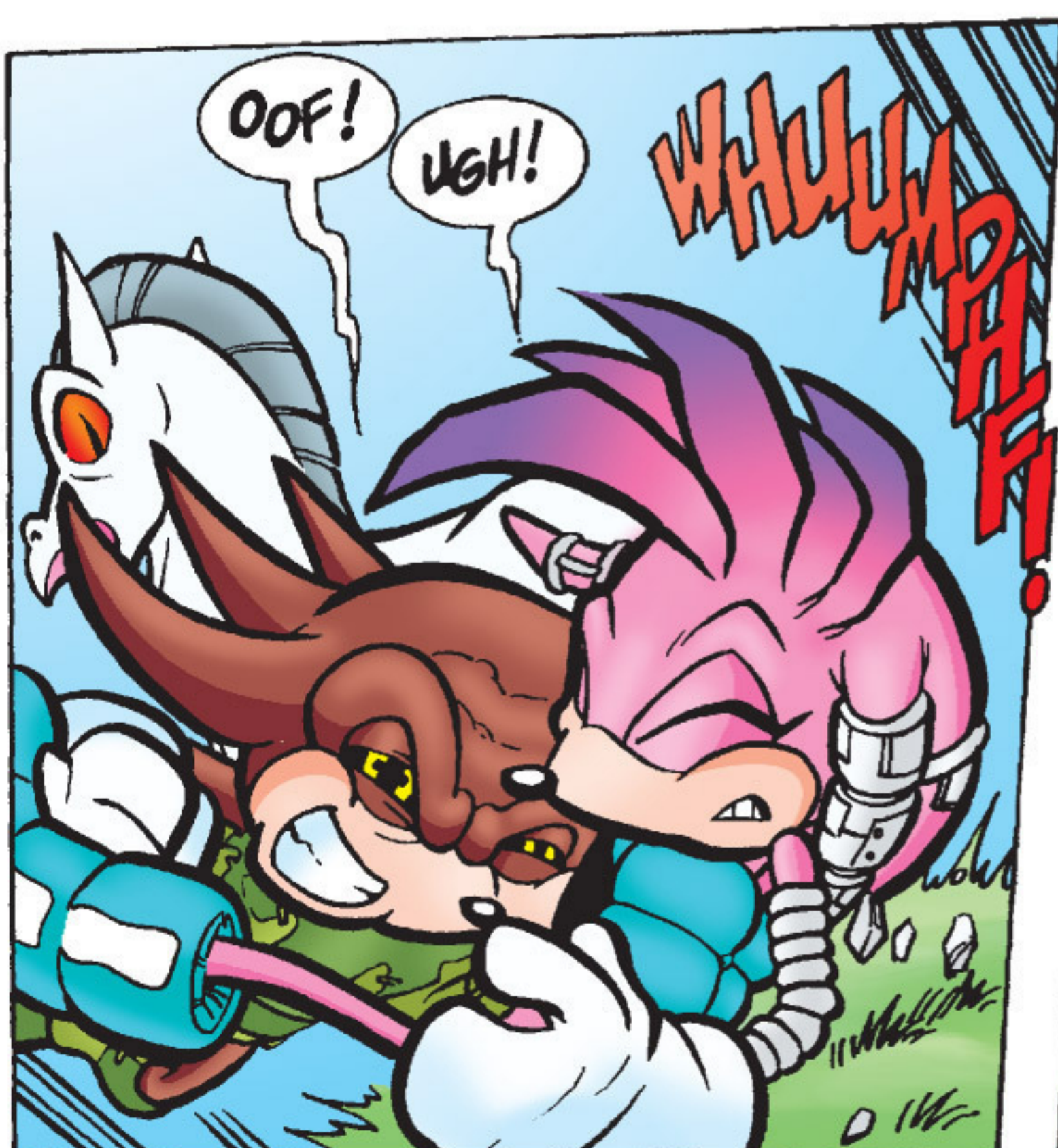
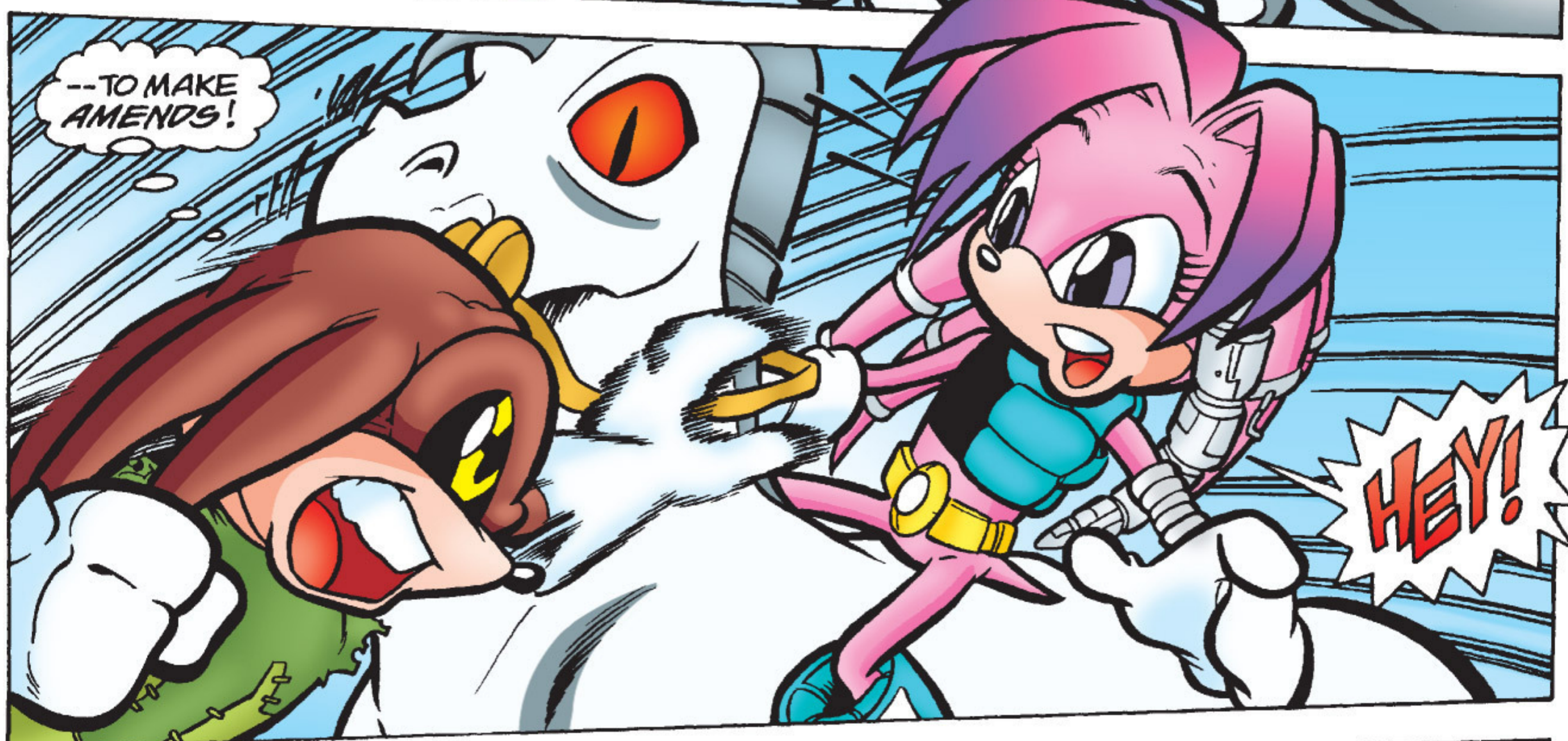
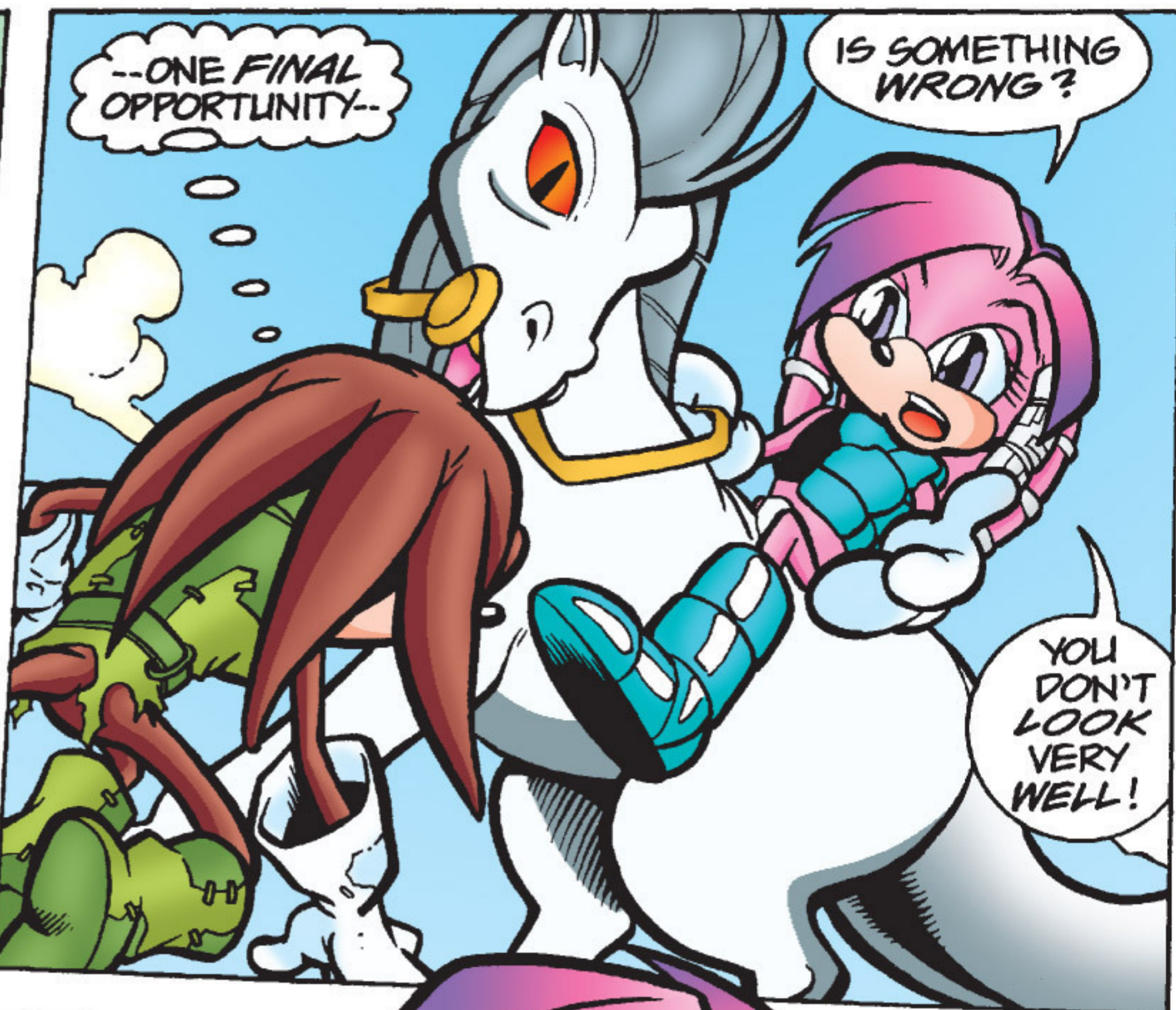
I MUST BE
GOING MAD!

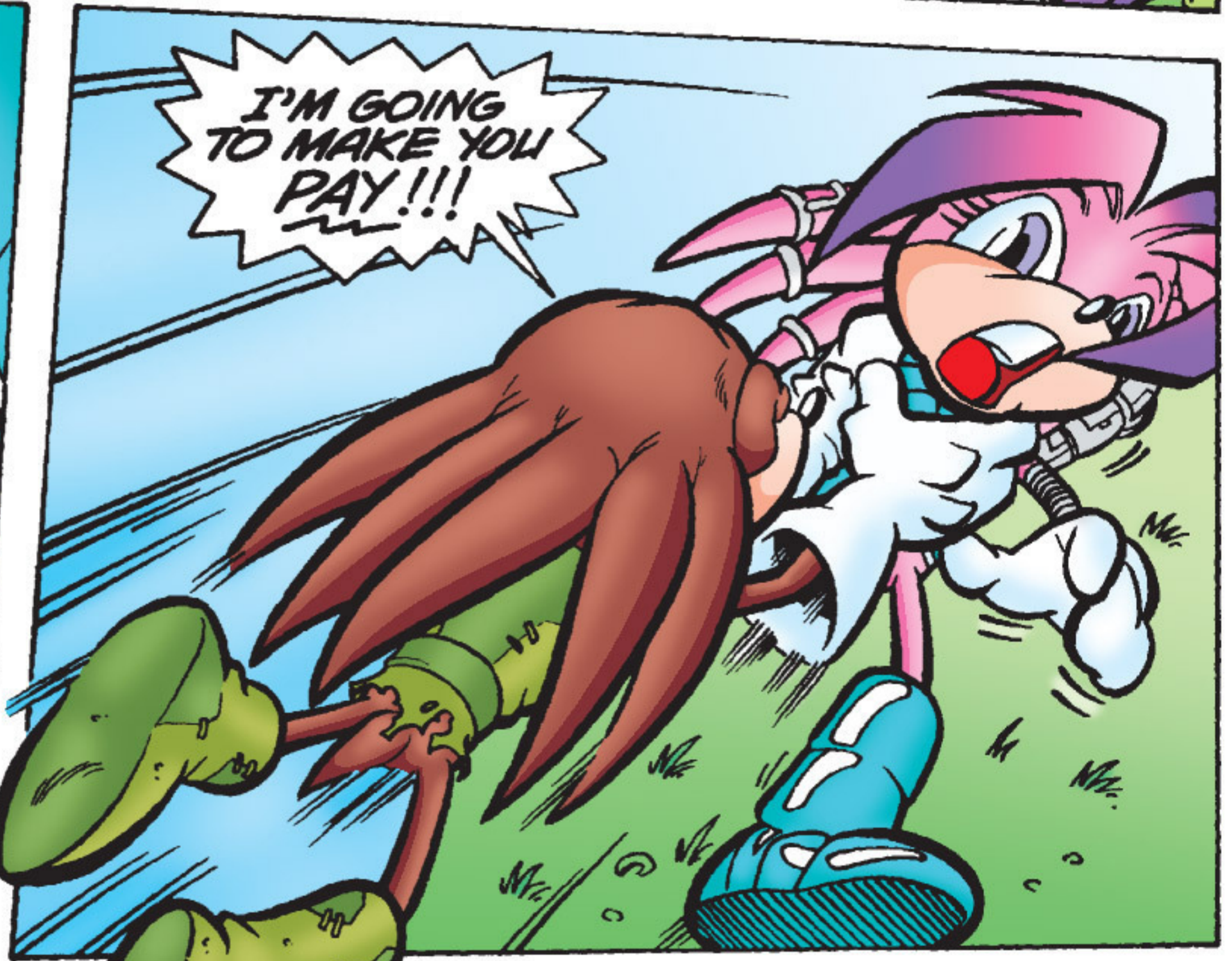
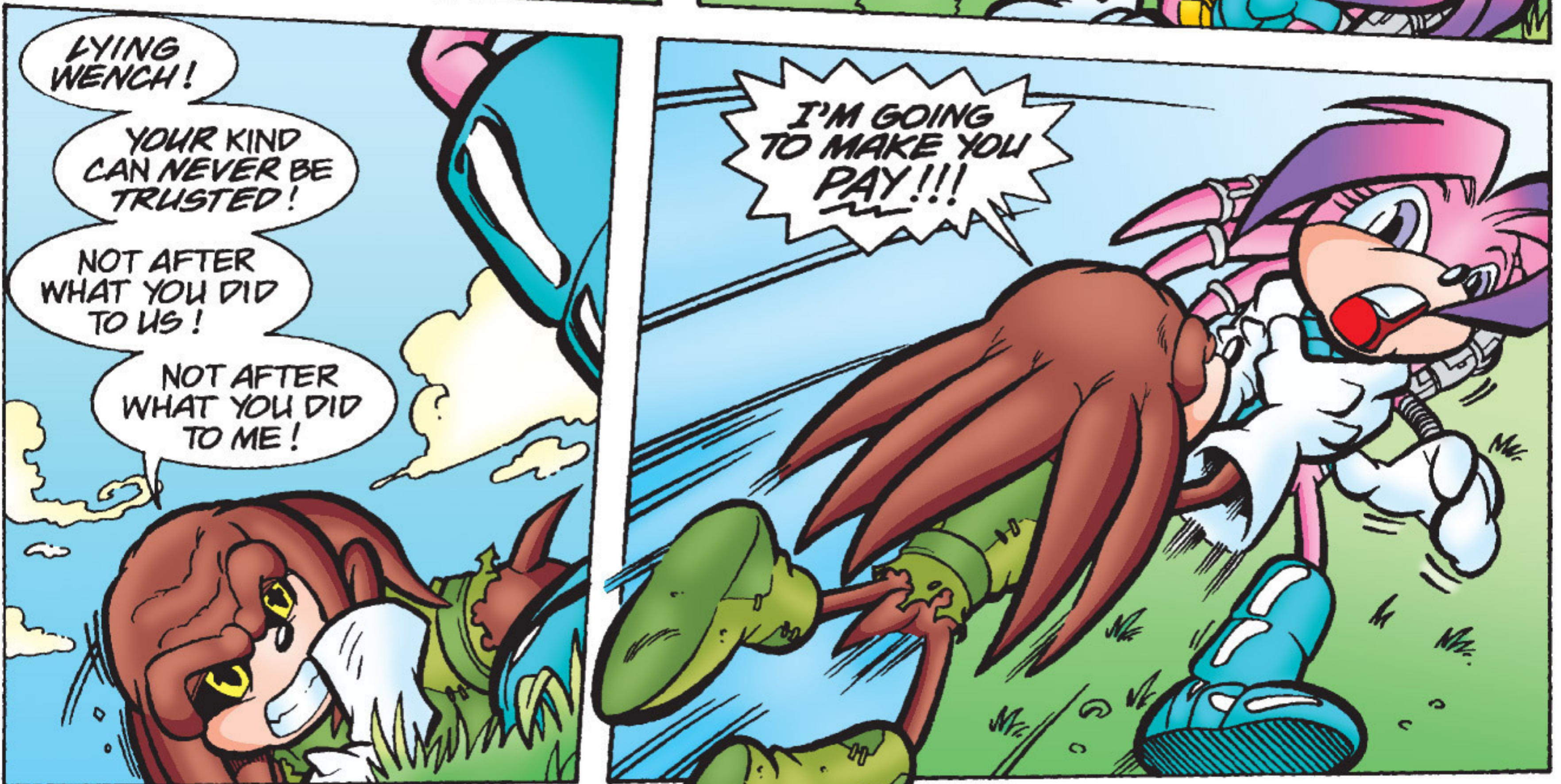
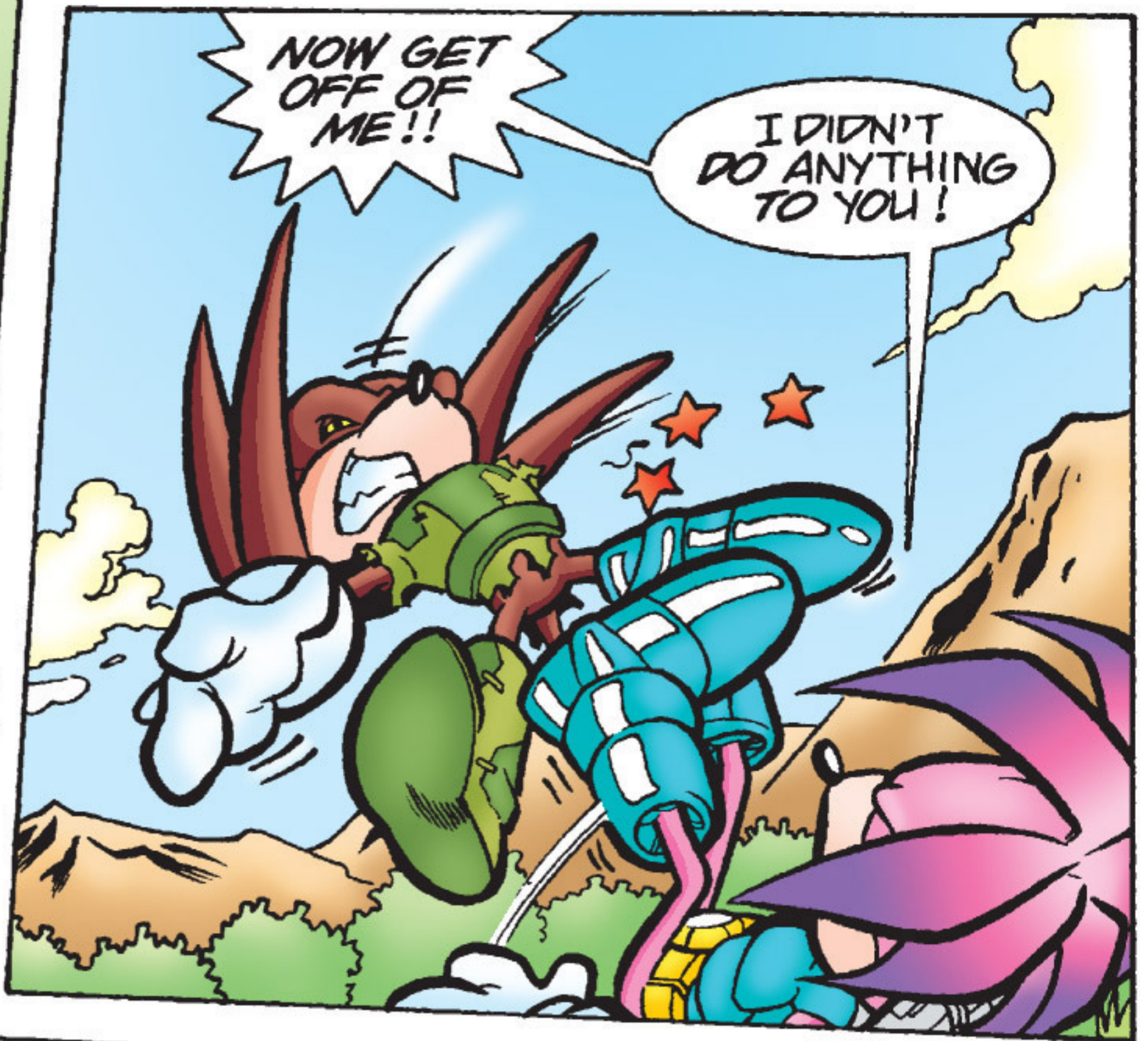
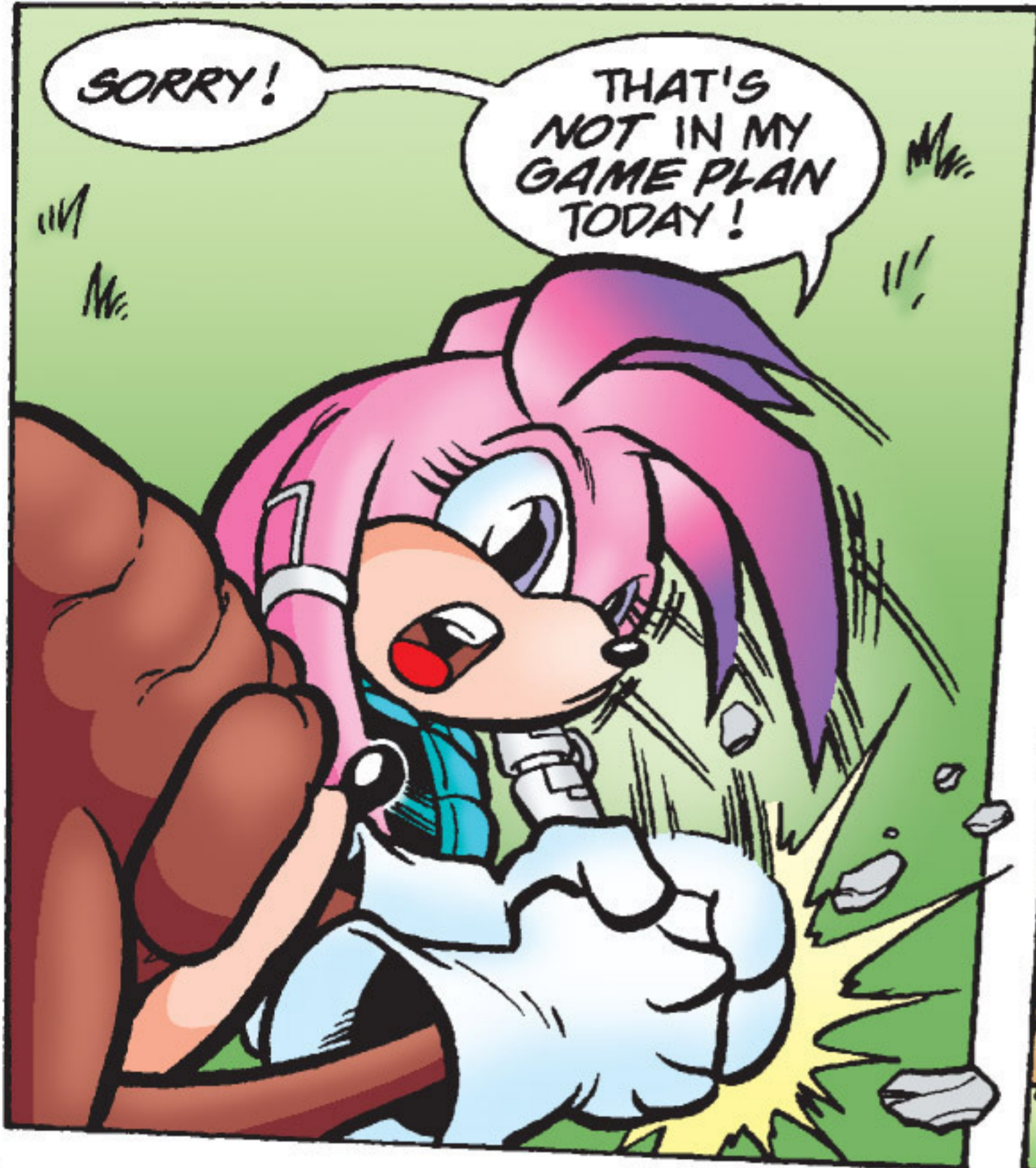
FATE
COULDN'T
POSSIBLY BE
SO CRUEL
TO ME!

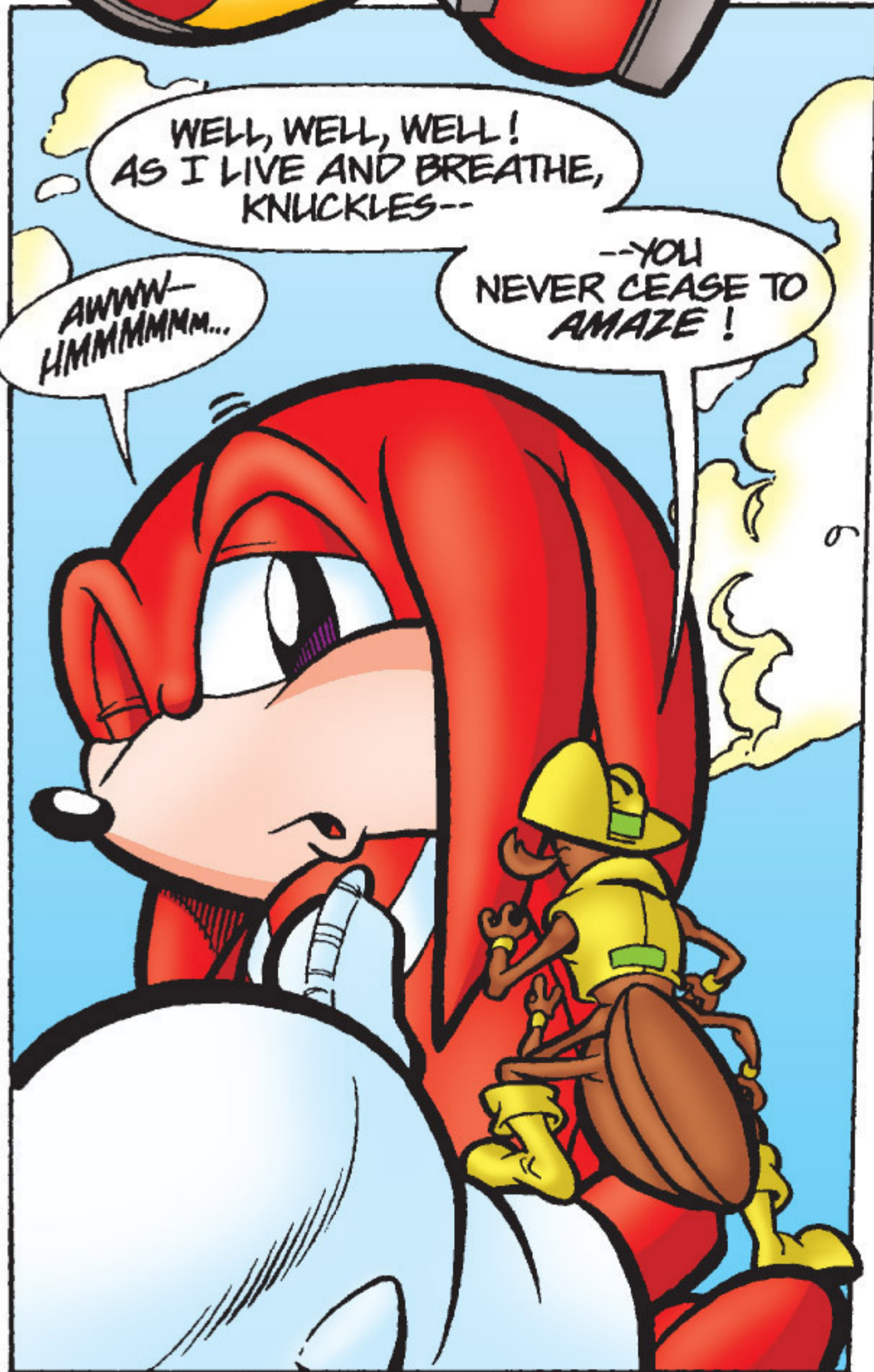
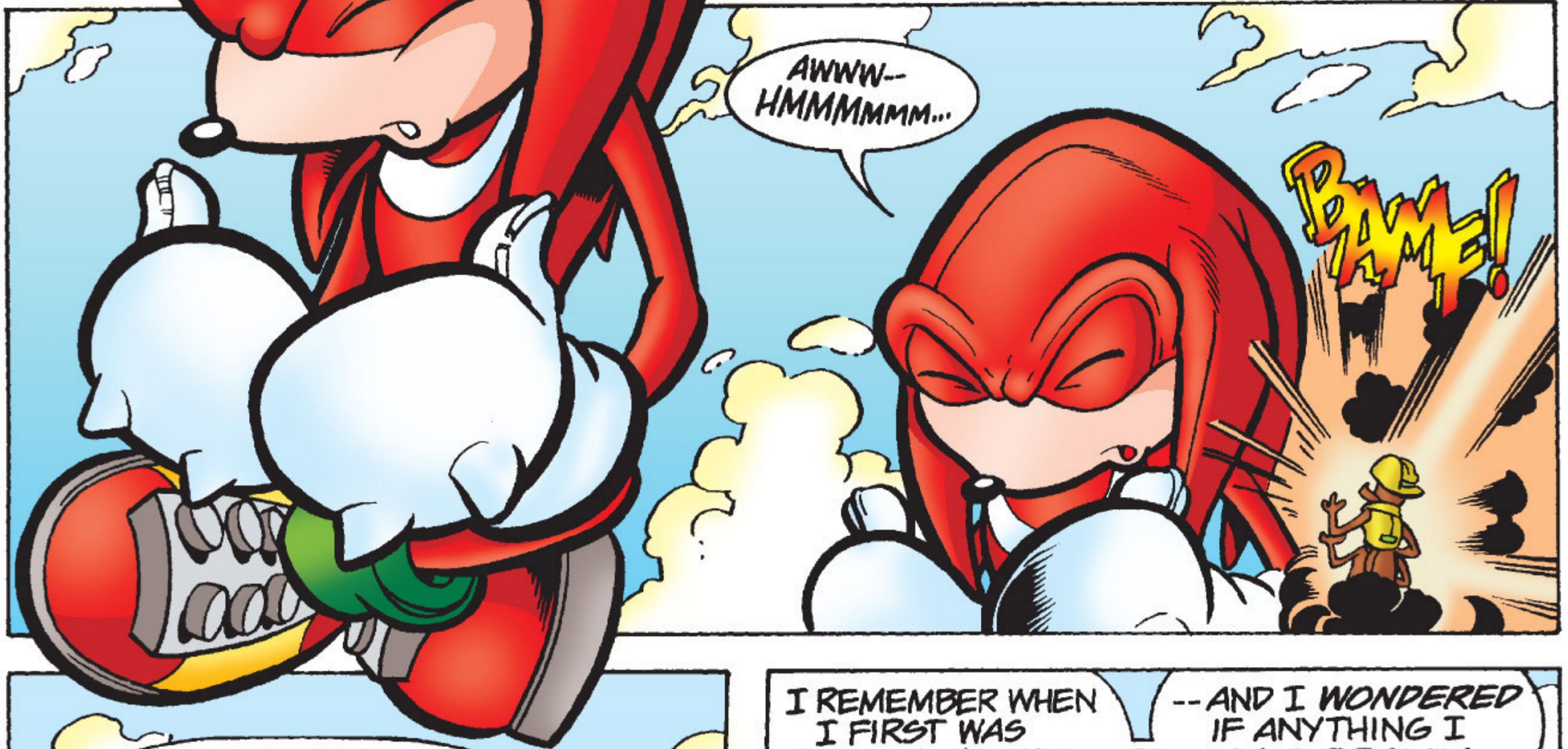
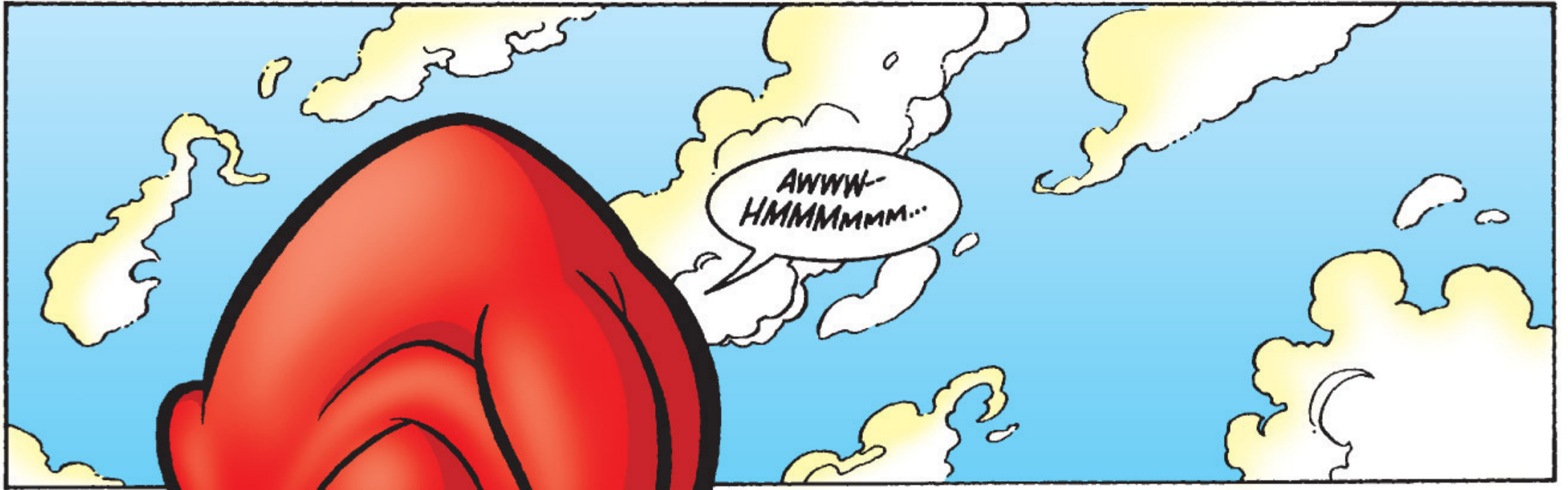
HELLO?

I'M SORRY
IF I SCARED
YOU!
IS EVERYTHING
ALRIGHT?

**THE
SPECTOR
WHOM
LATHAM
JAMES!!!**

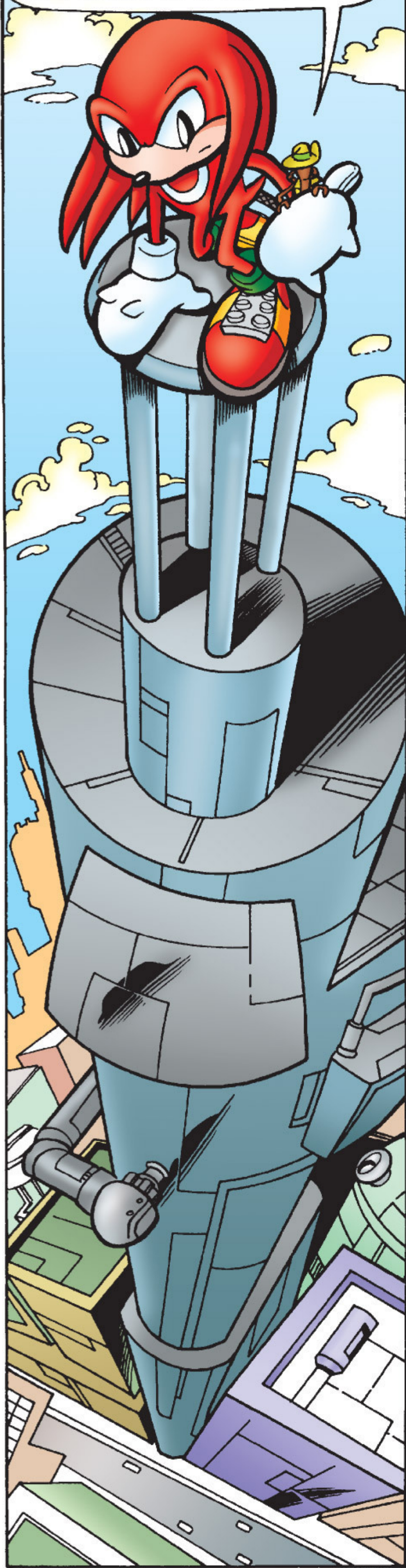






*BACK IN KNUCKLES ARCHIVES VOL. 1 -- EDITOR

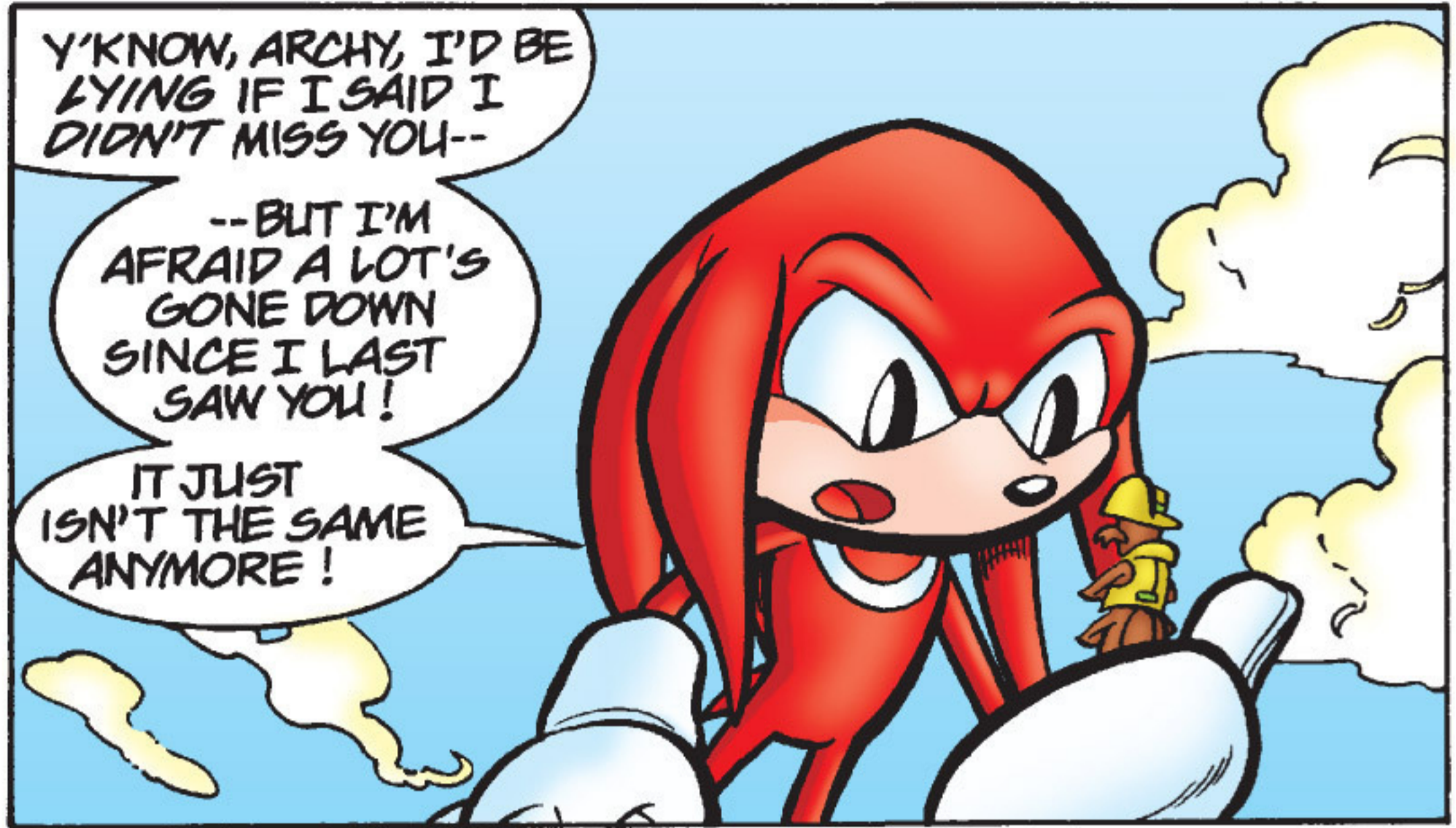
--THIS ISN'T WHAT I WOULD CALL A TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT!



Y'KNOW, ARCHY, I'D BE LYING IF I SAID I DIDN'T MISS YOU--

--BUT I'M AFRAID A LOT'S GONE DOWN SINCE I LAST SAW YOU!

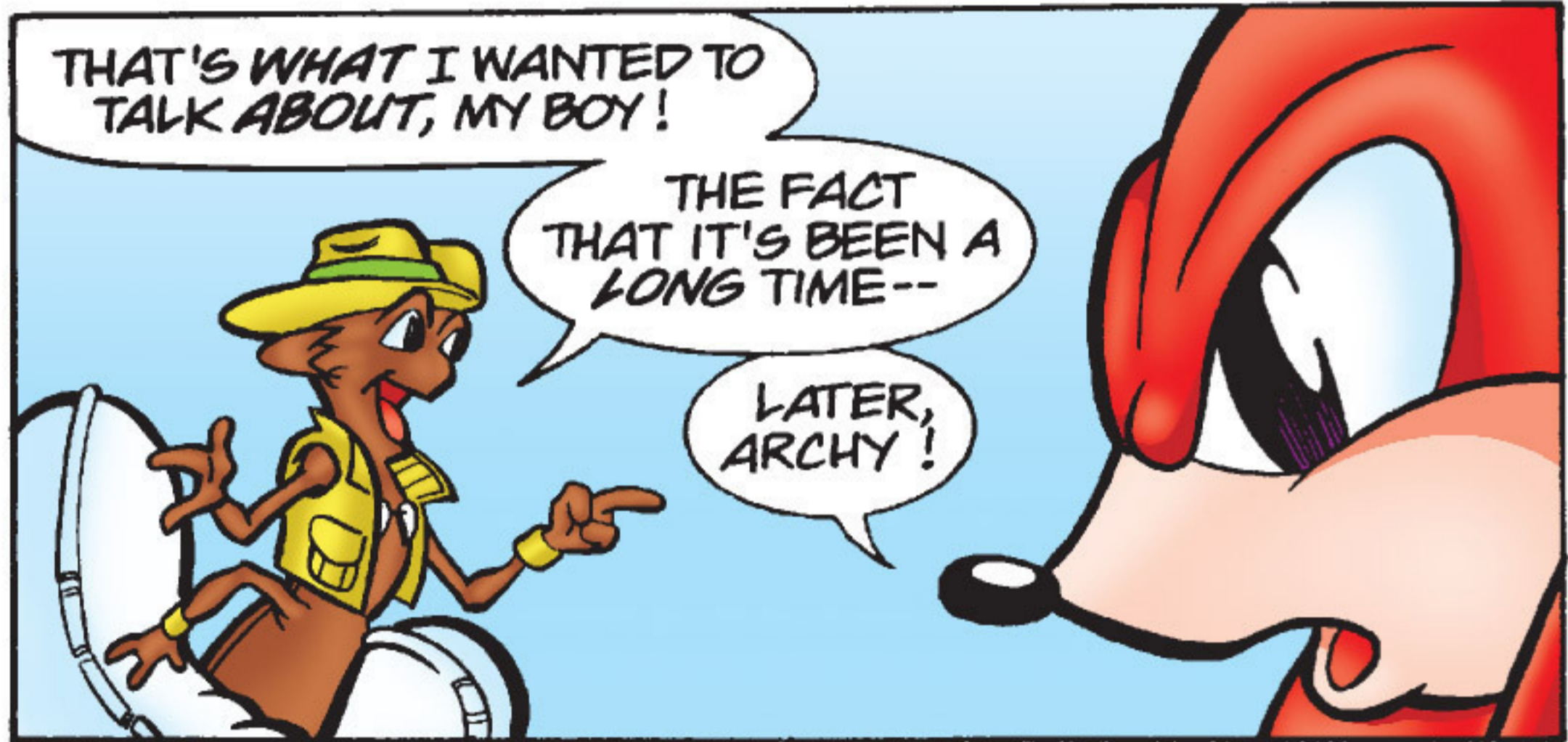
IT JUST ISN'T THE SAME ANYMORE!



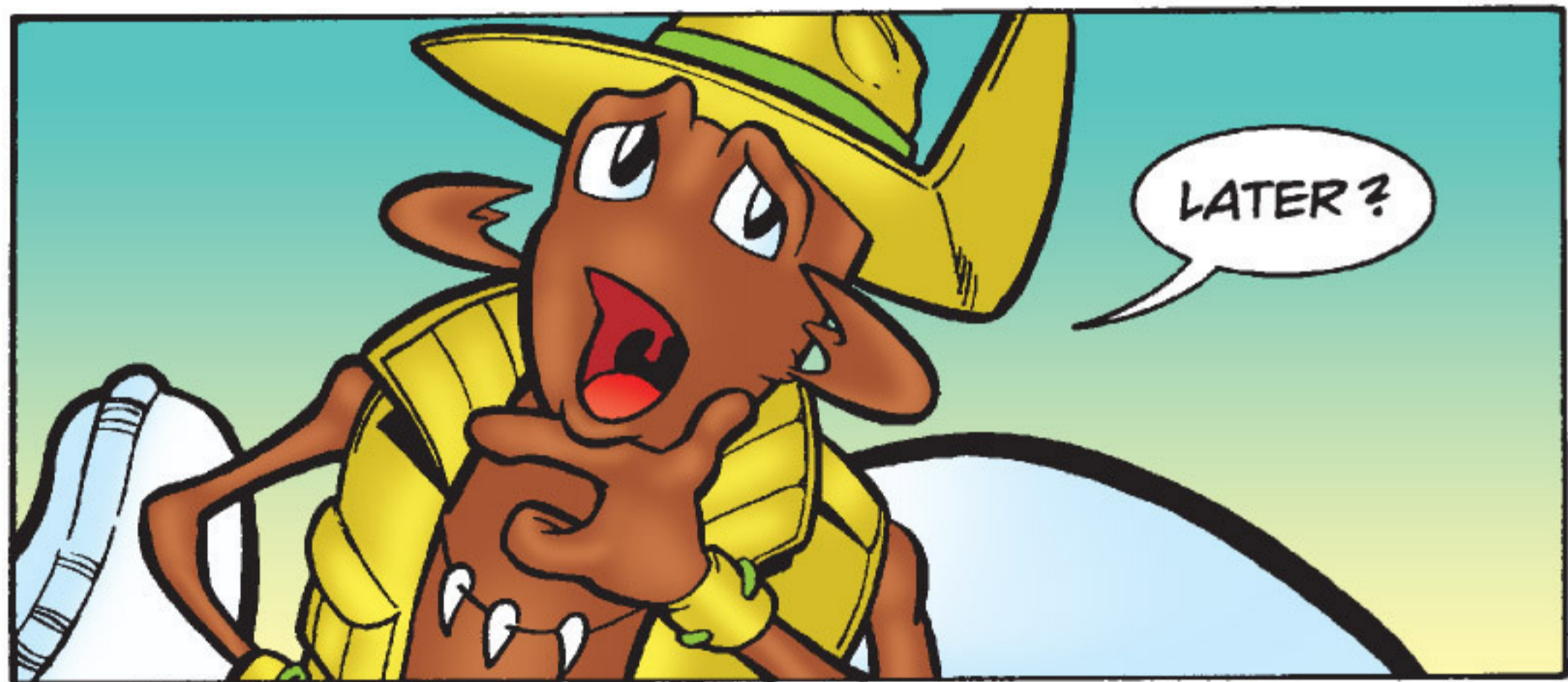
THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT, MY BOY!

THE FACT THAT IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME--

LATER, ARCHY!

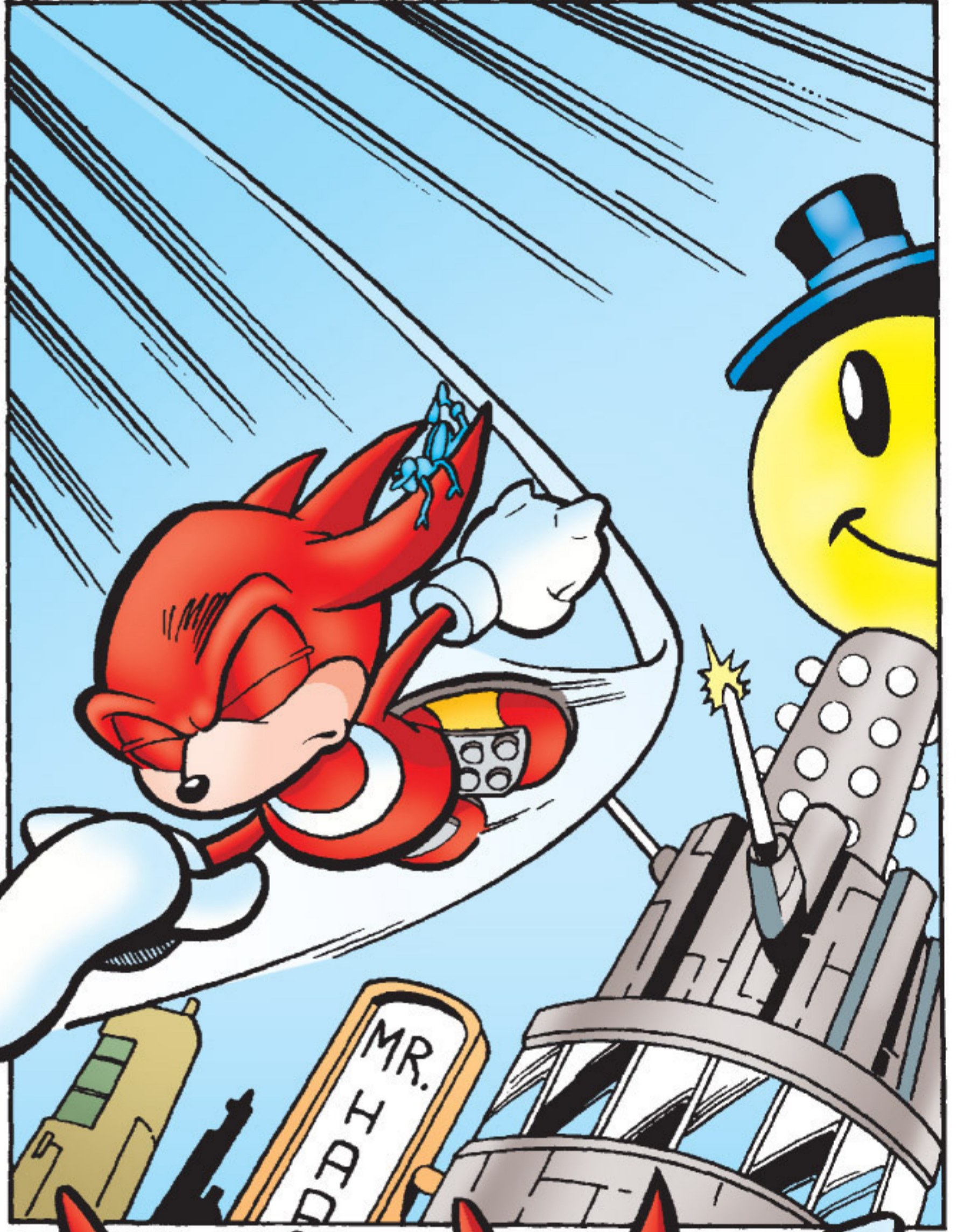
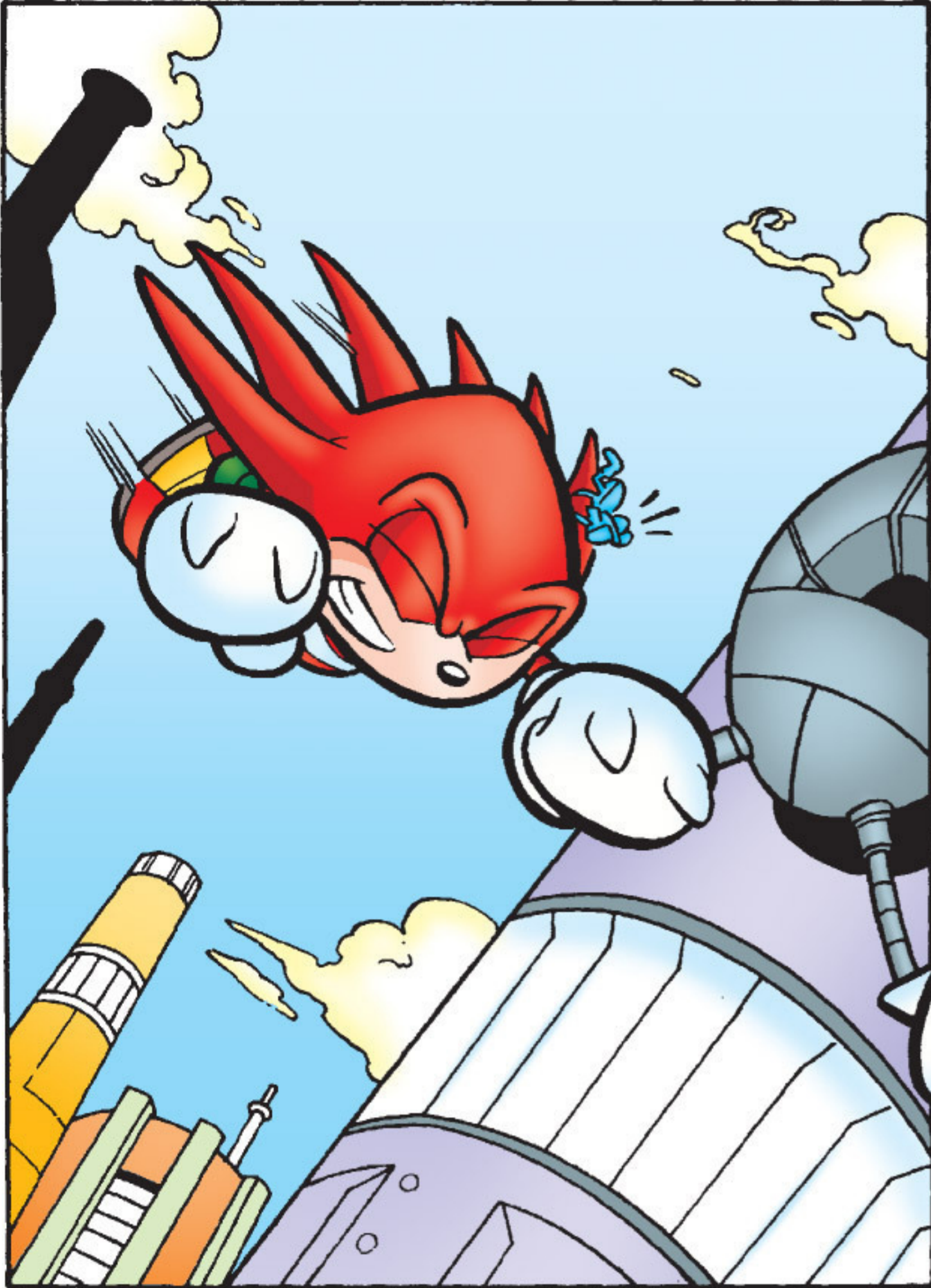


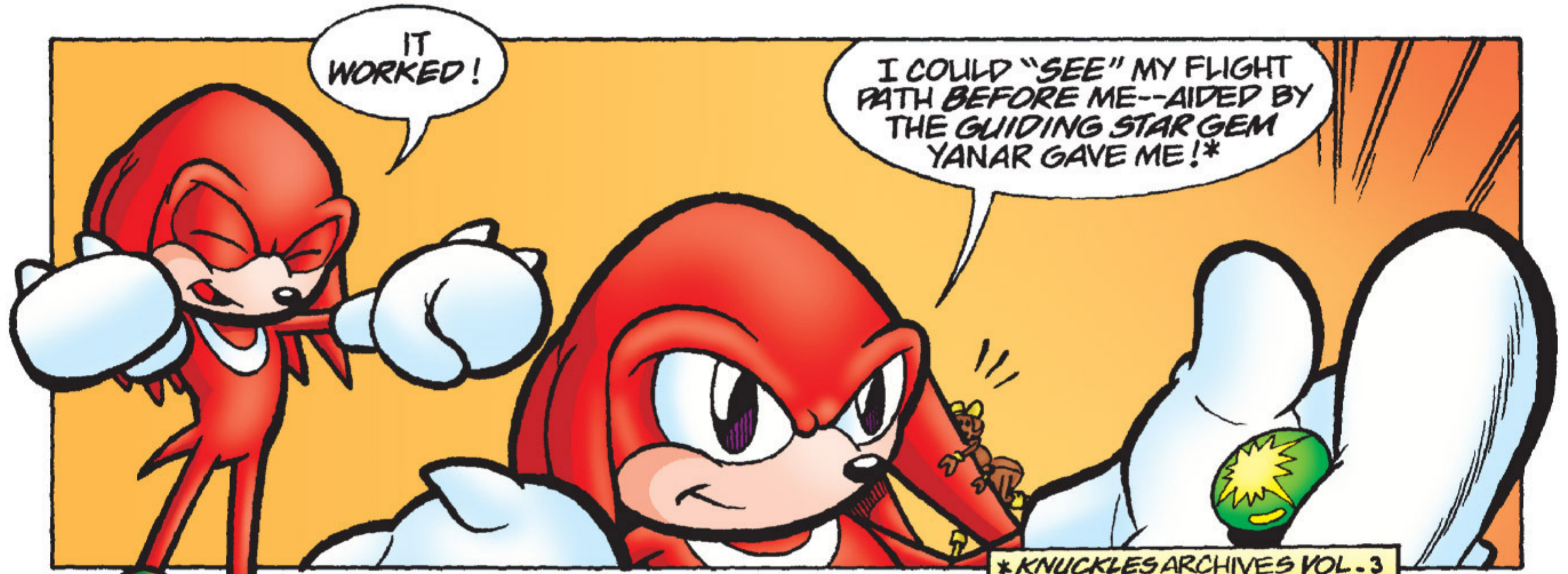
LATER?



YEAH--



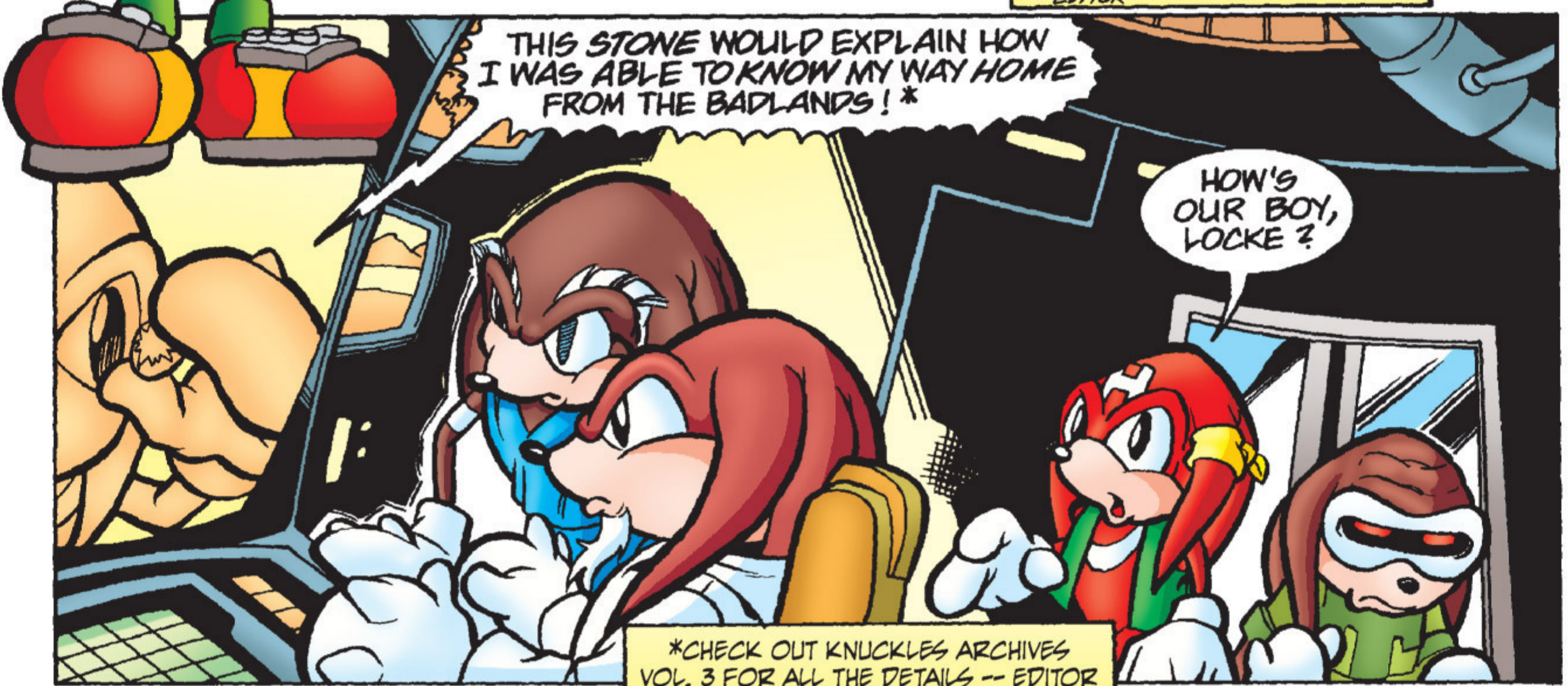




IT WORKED!

I COULD "SEE" MY FLIGHT PATH BEFORE ME--AIDED BY THE GUIDING STAR GEM YANAR GAVE ME!*

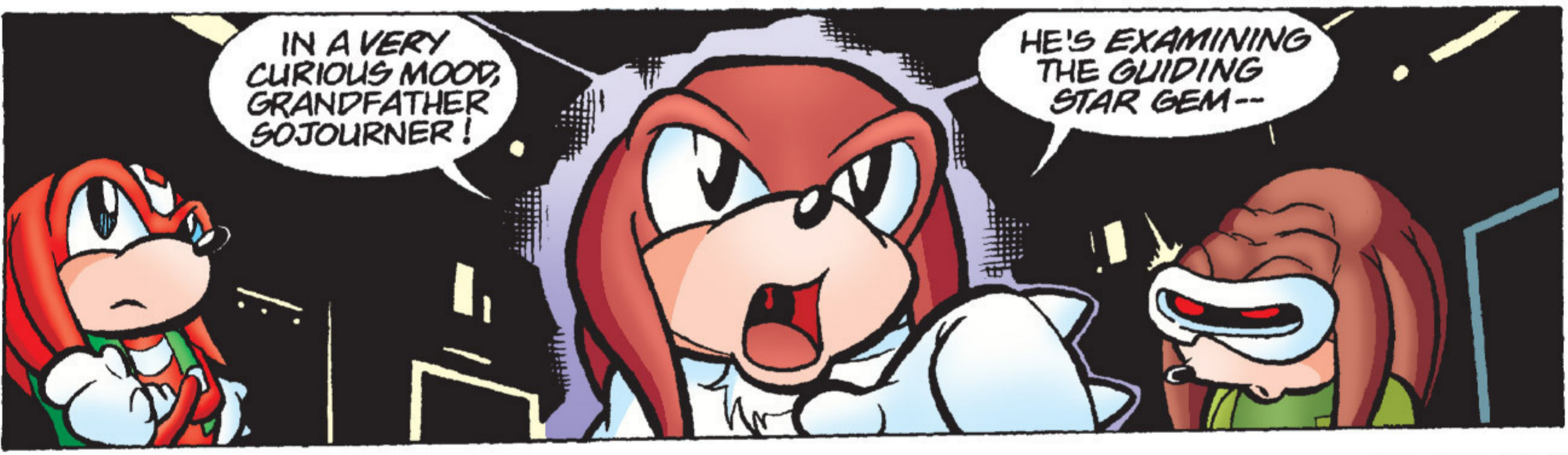
*KNUCKLES ARCHIVES VOL. 3 --EDITOR



THIS STONE WOULD EXPLAIN HOW I WAS ABLE TO KNOW MY WAY HOME FROM THE BADLANDS!*

HOW'S OUR BOY, LOCKE?

*CHECK OUT KNUCKLES ARCHIVES VOL. 3 FOR ALL THE DETAILS --EDITOR



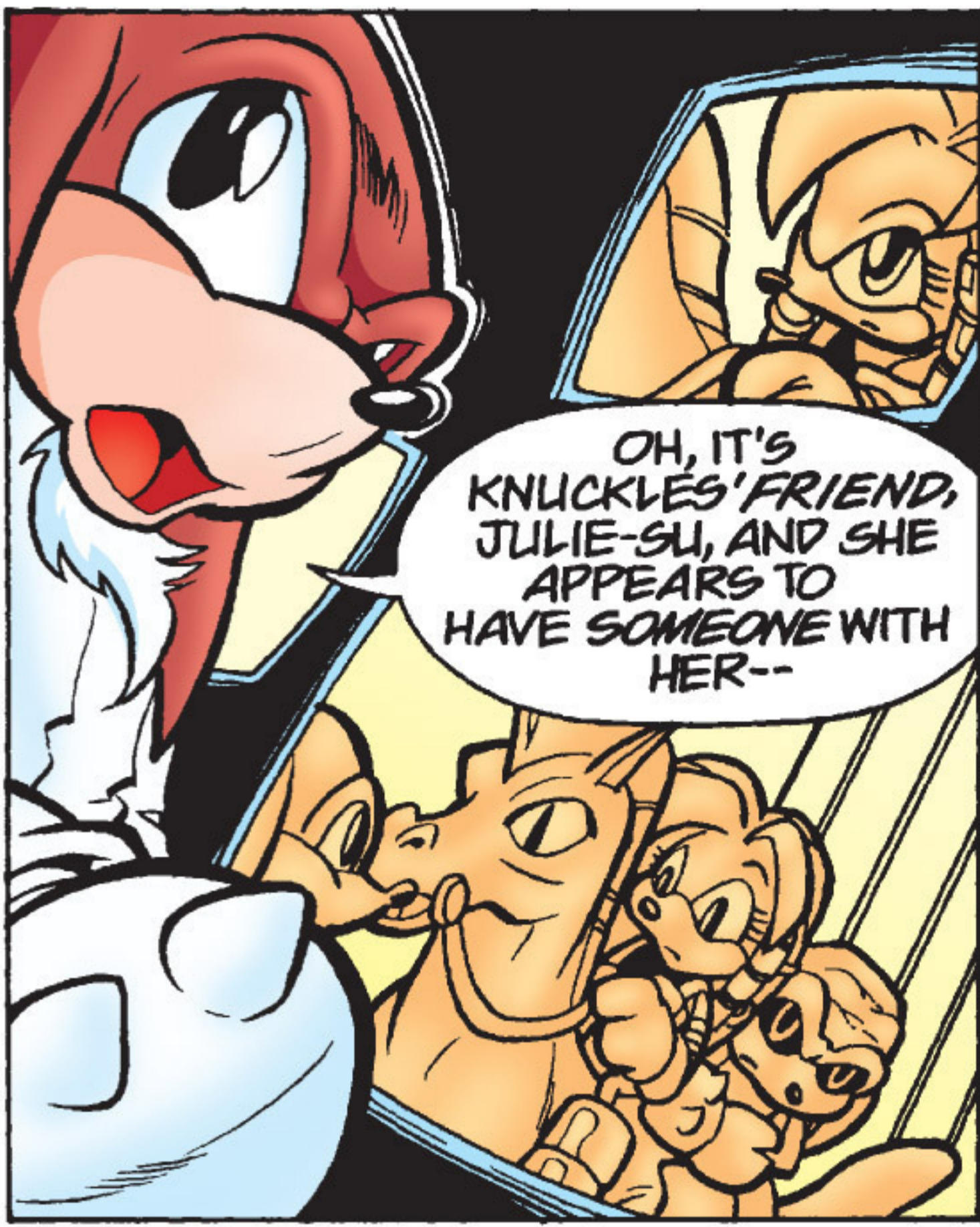
IN A VERY CURIOUS MOOD, GRANDFATHER SOJOURNER!

HE'S EXAMINING THE GUIDING STAR GEM--

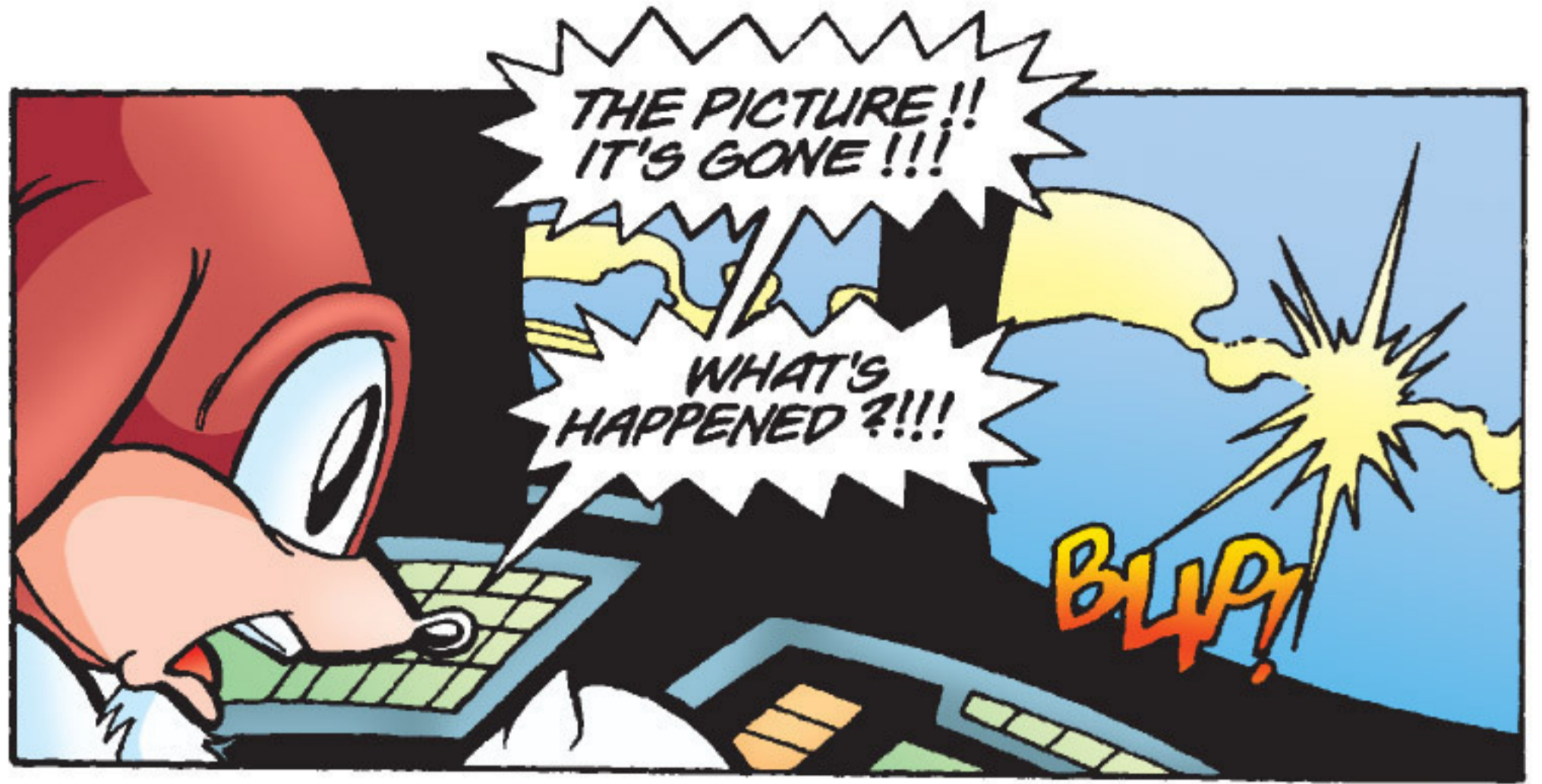


--AND APPARENTLY HE'S ON THE VERGE OF UNLOCKING ITS SECRETS!

WHO'S THAT APPROACHING KNUCKLES?



OH, IT'S KNUCKLES' FRIEND, JULIE-SU, AND SHE APPEARS TO HAVE SOMEONE WITH HER--



THE PICTURE!! IT'S GONE!!!

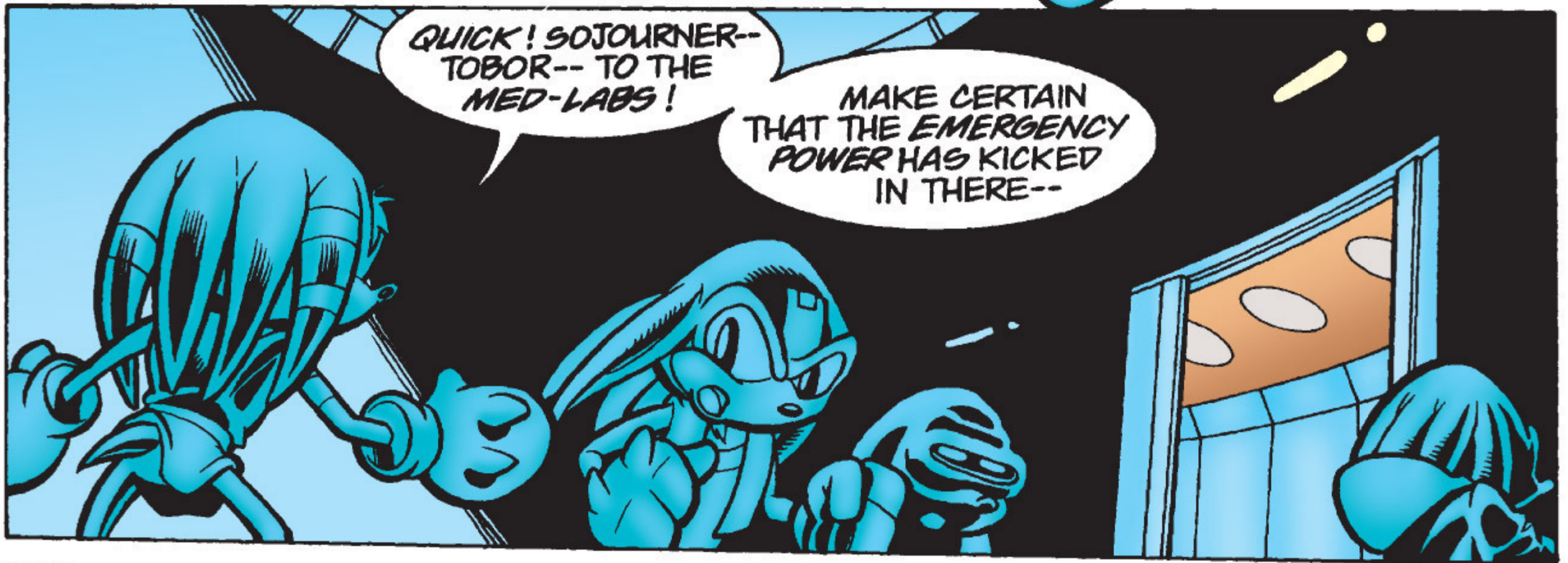
WHAT'S HAPPENED?!!!

BLIP!



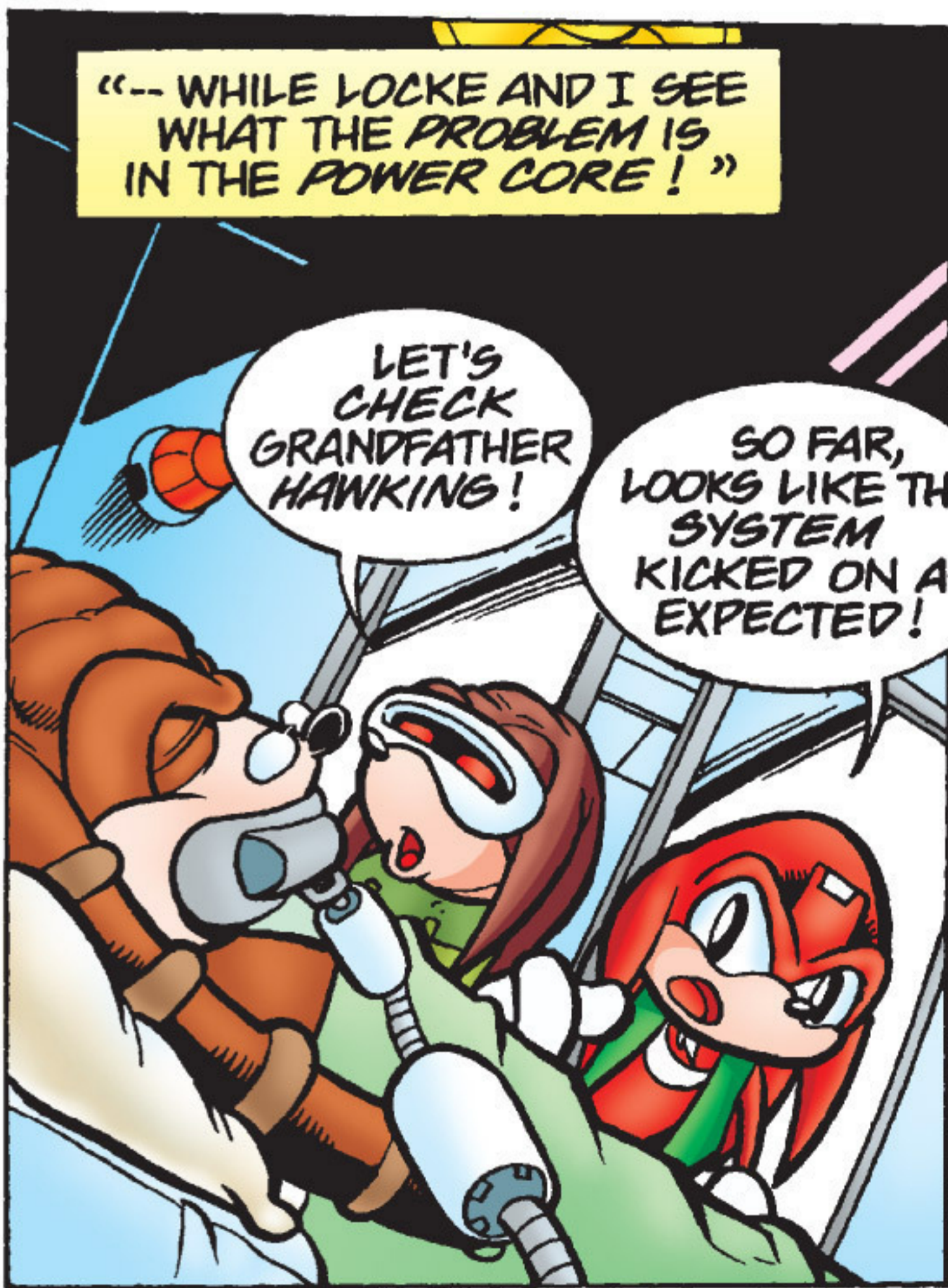
THE POWER'S OUT!!

A CIRCUIT MUST HAVE SHORTED OUT AT THE GENERATORS!



QUICK! SOJOURNER--TOBOR-- TO THE MED-LABS!

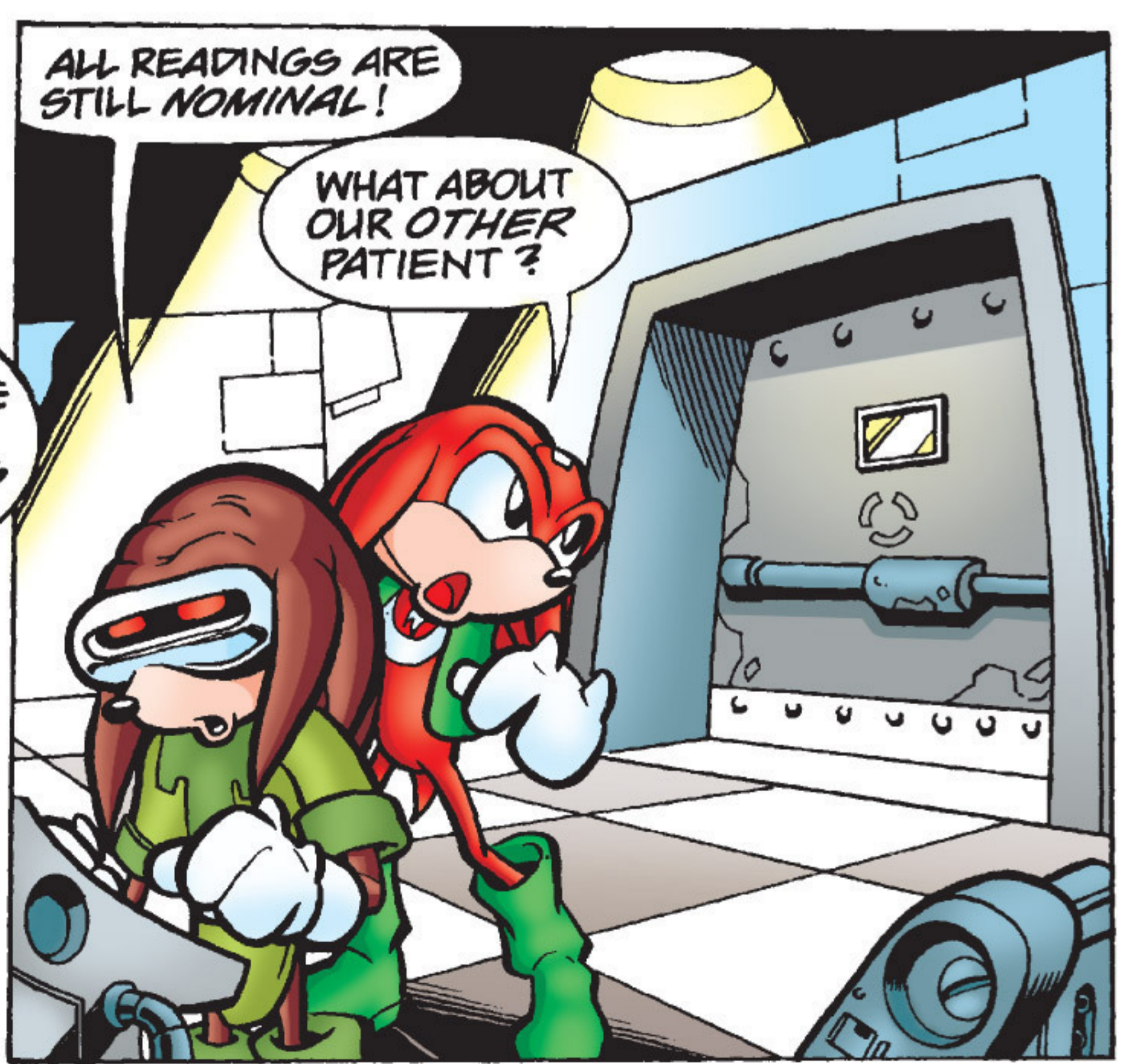
MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE EMERGENCY POWER HAS KICKED IN THERE--



"... WHILE LOCKE AND I SEE WHAT THE PROBLEM IS IN THE POWER CORE!"

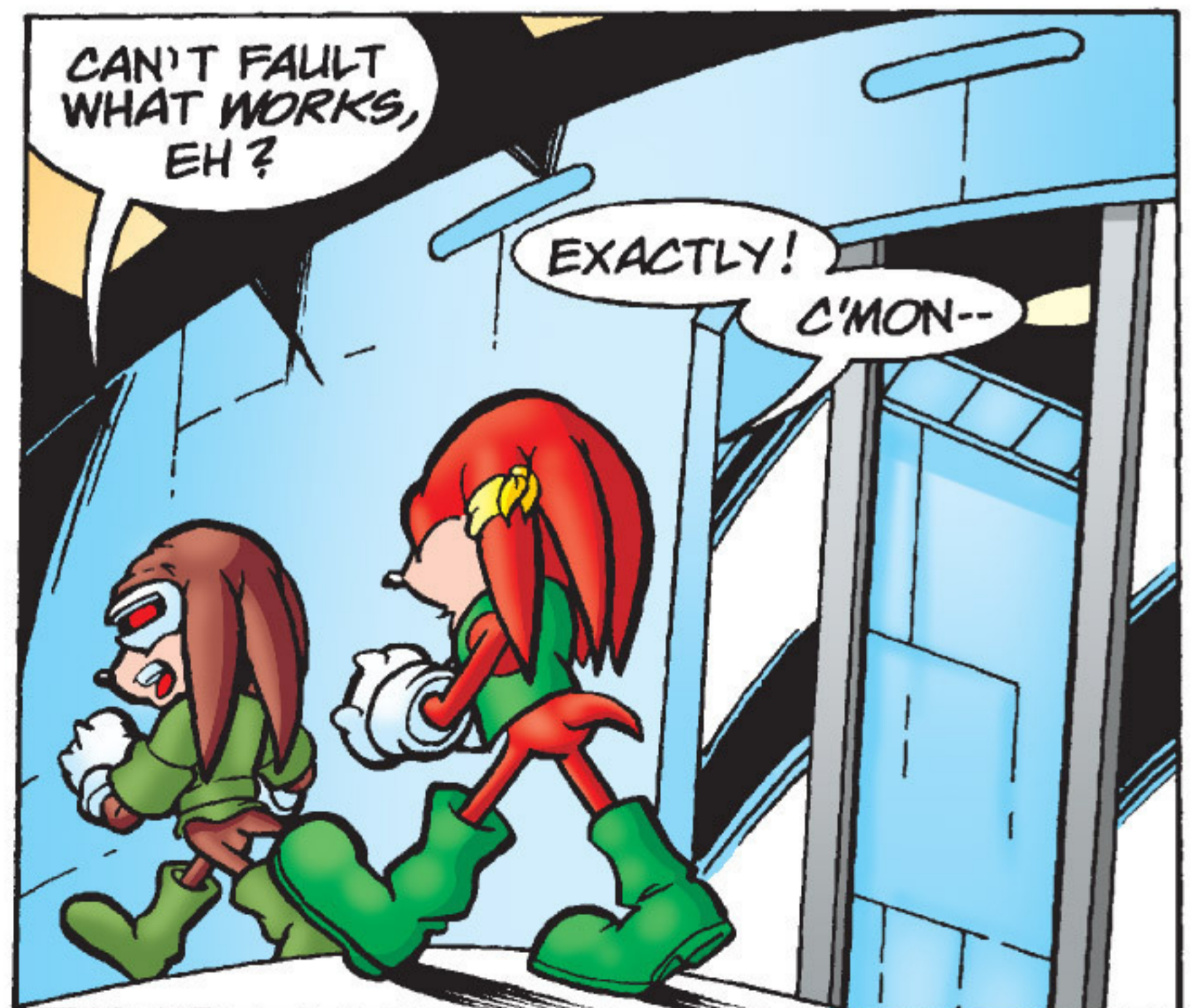
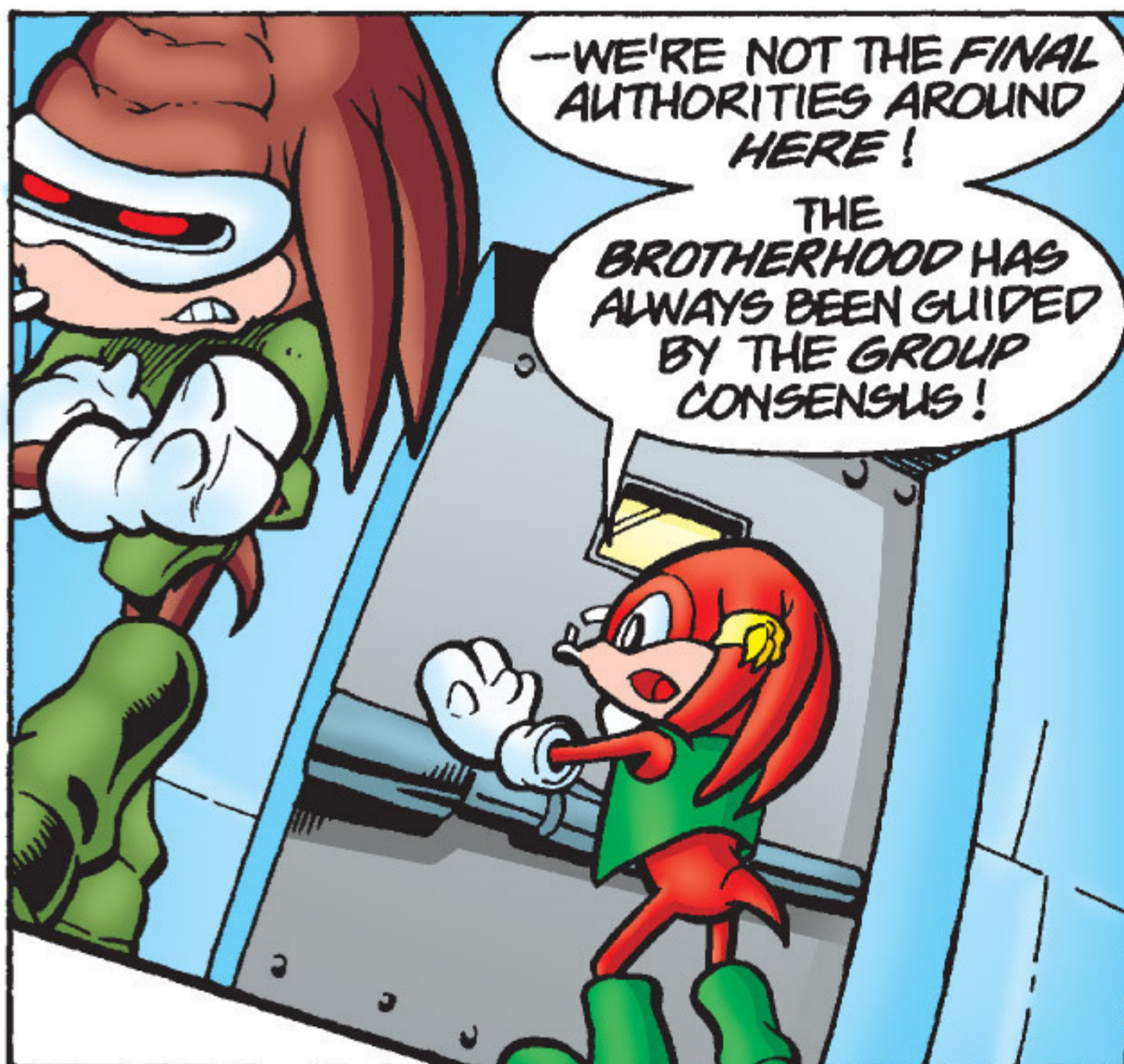
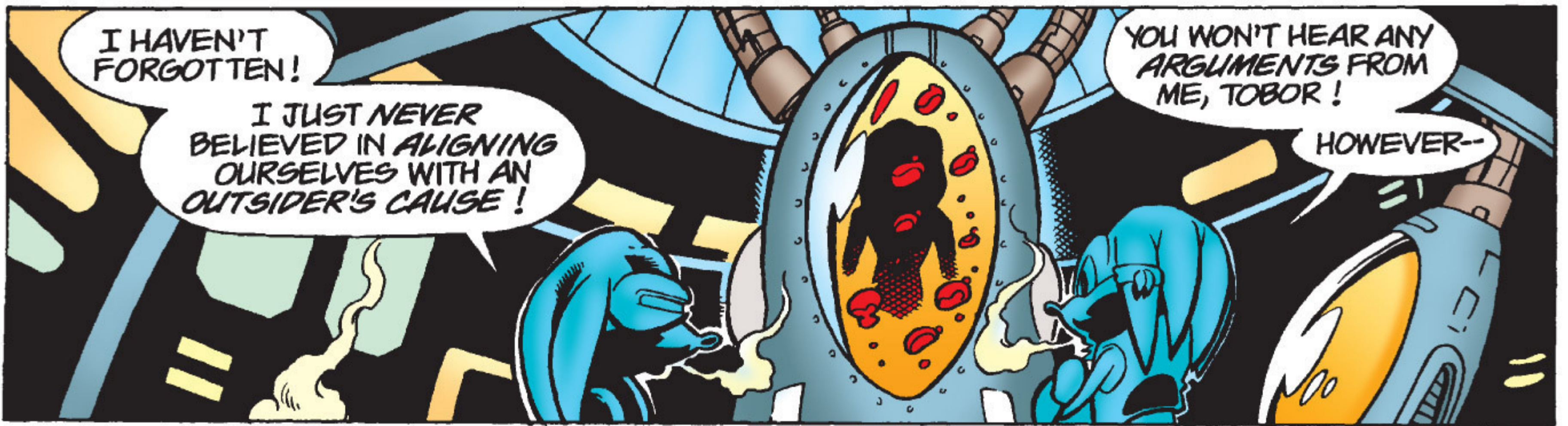
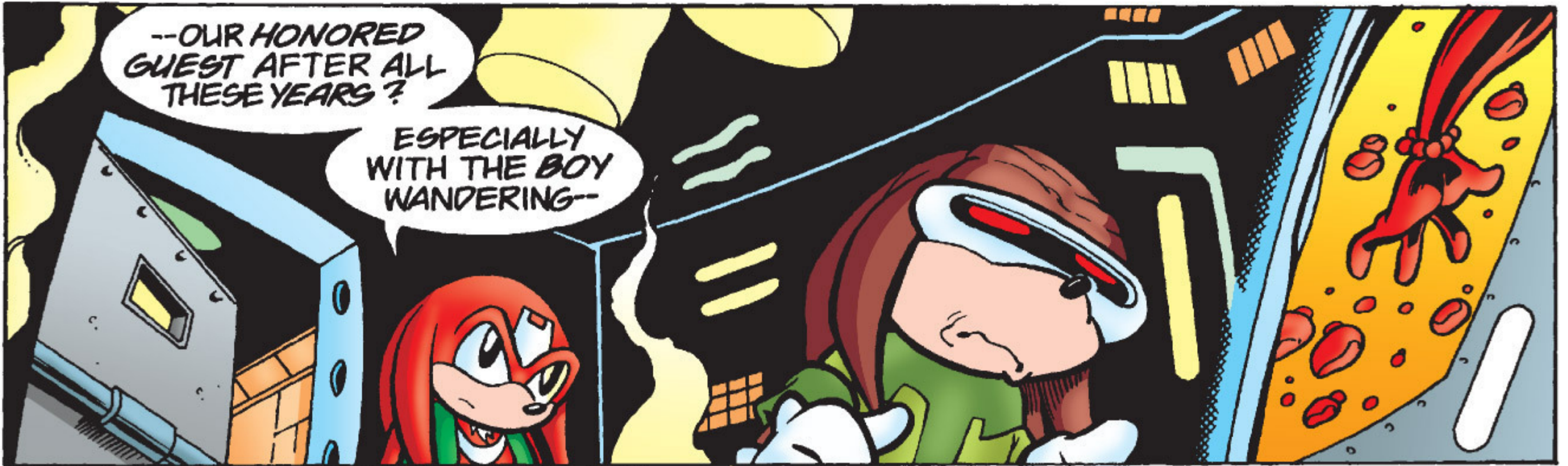
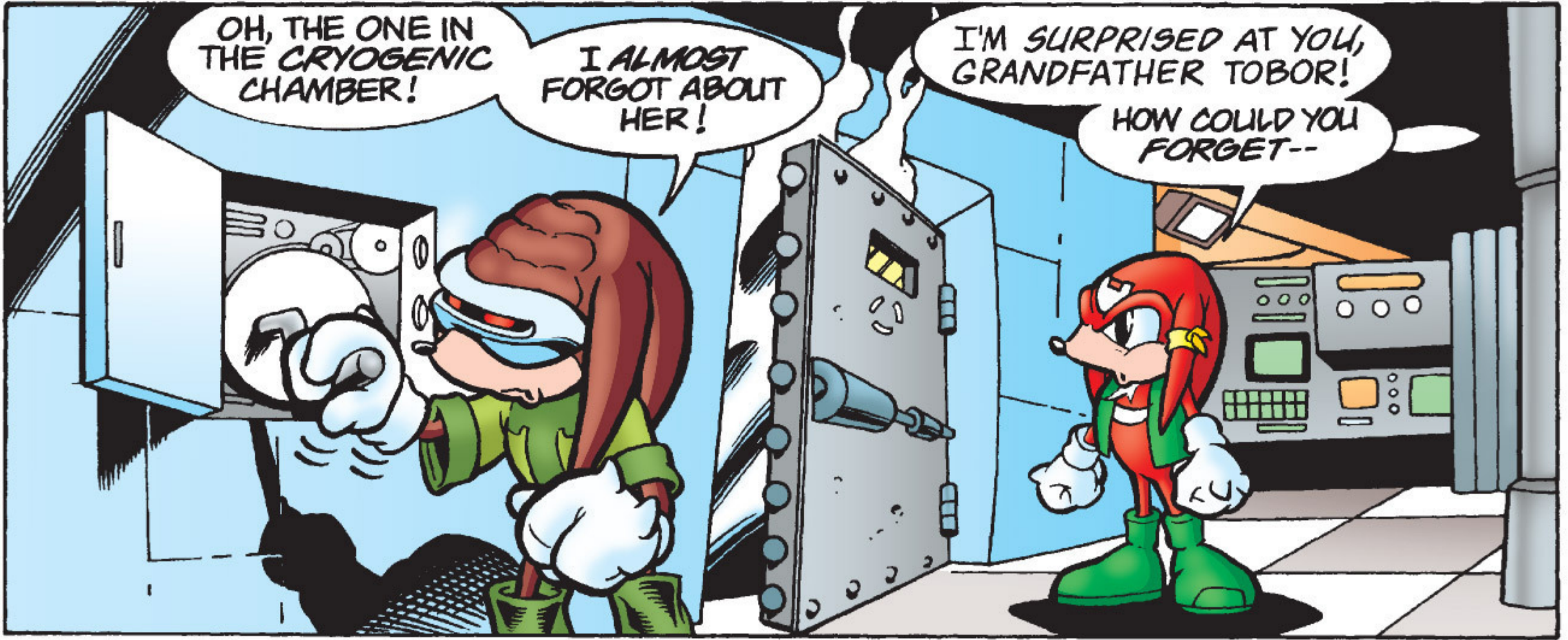
LET'S CHECK GRANDFATHER HAWKING!

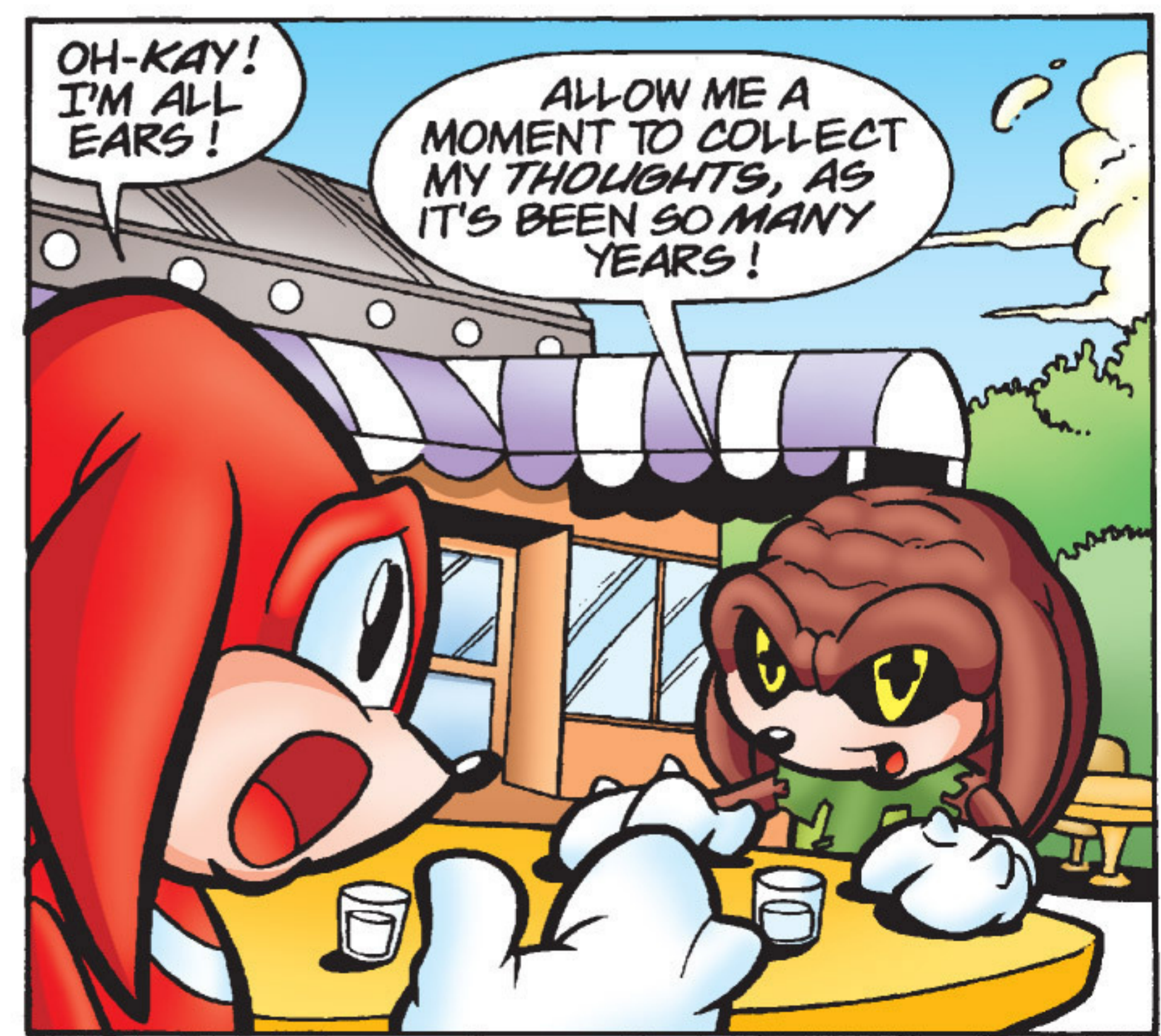
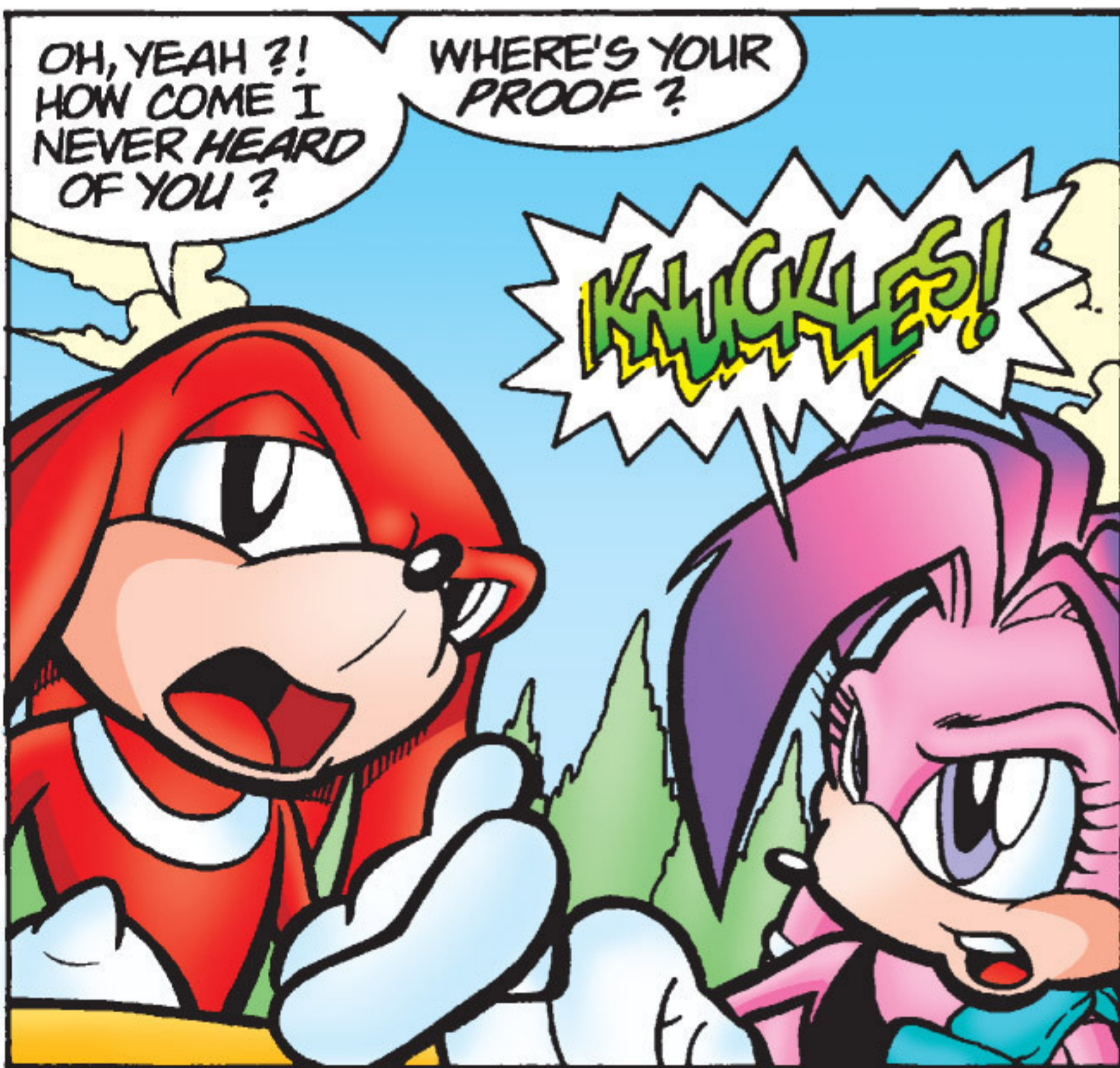
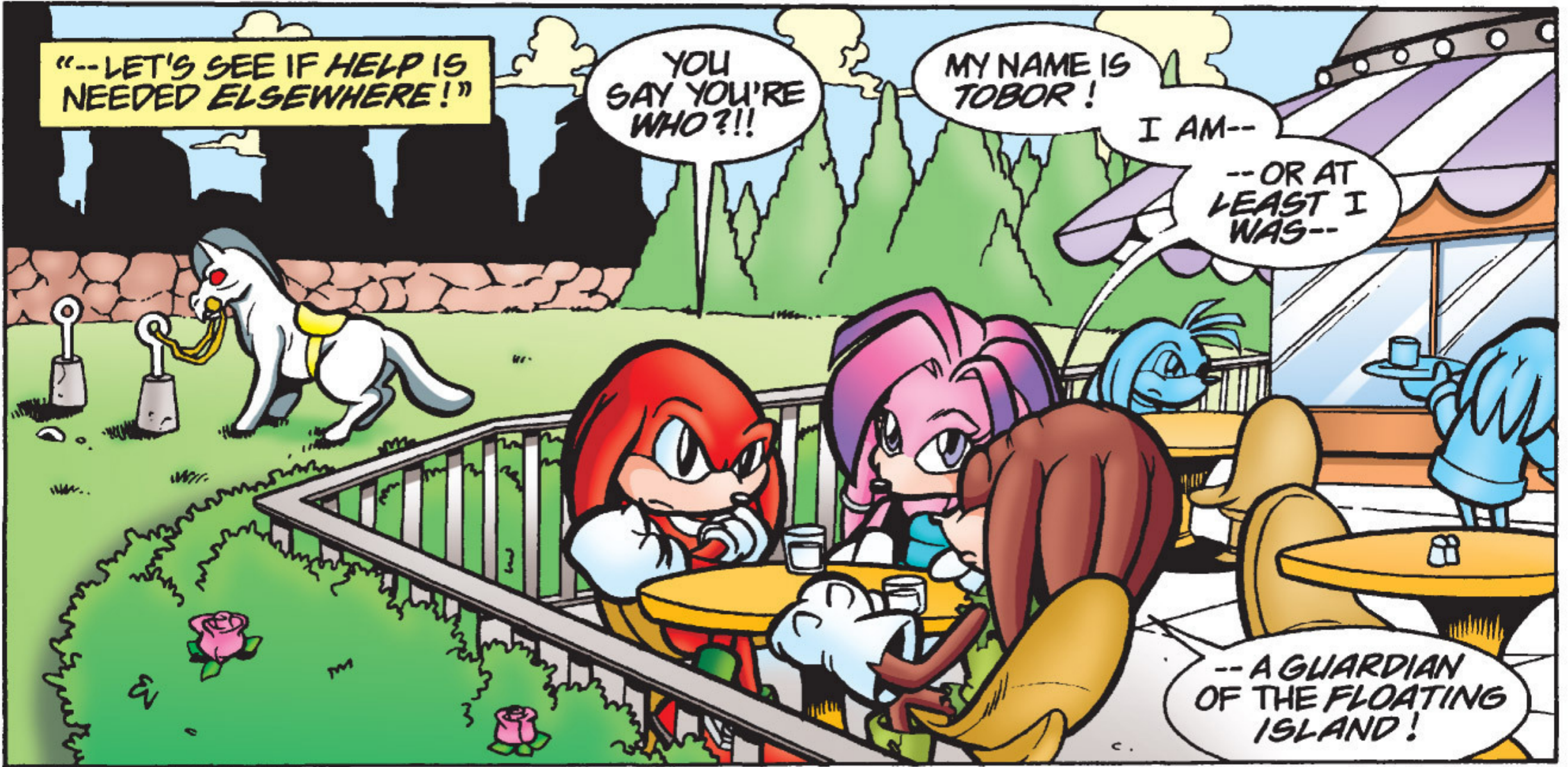
SO FAR, LOOKS LIKE THE SYSTEM KICKED ON AS EXPECTED!



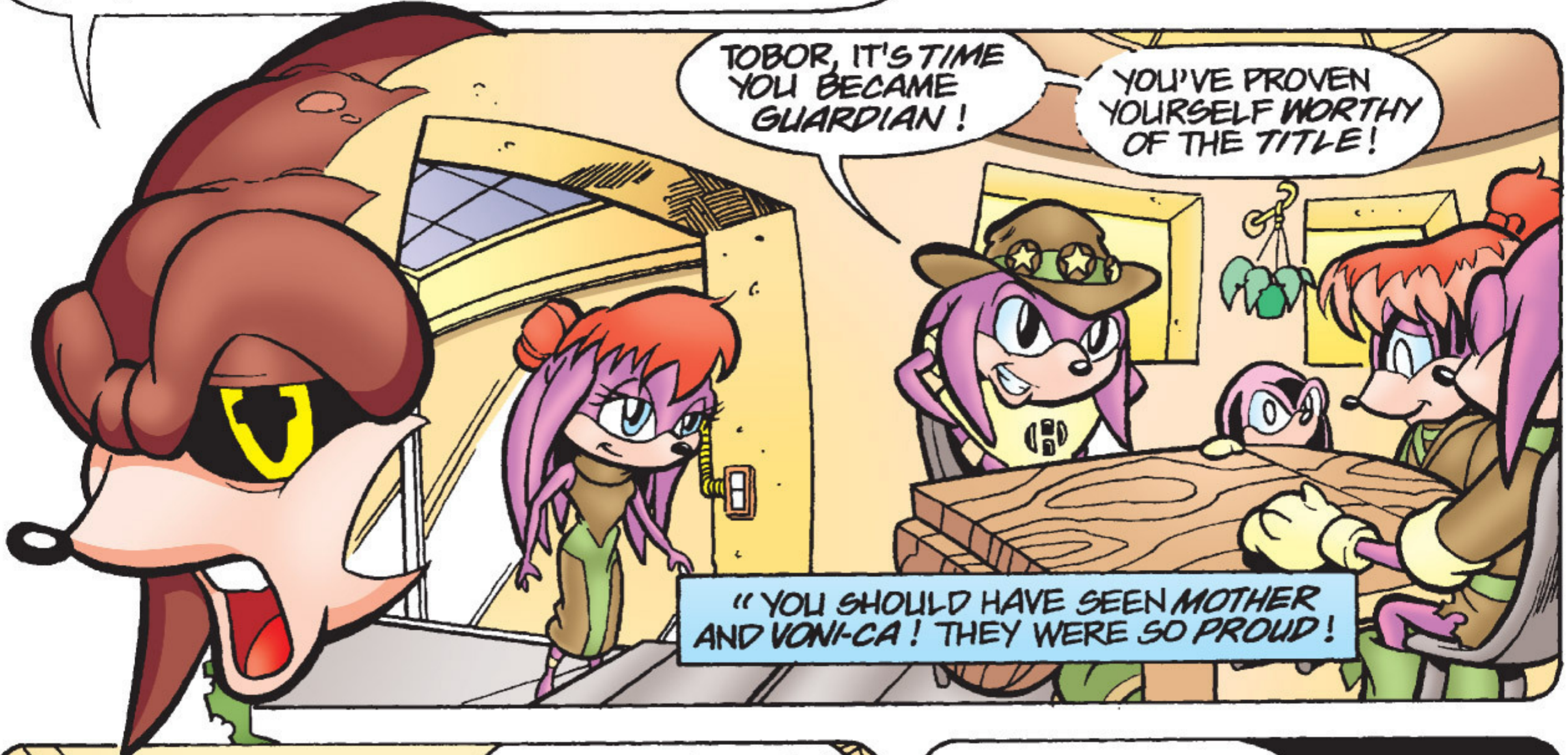
ALL READINGS ARE STILL NOMINAL!

WHAT ABOUT OUR OTHER PATIENT?





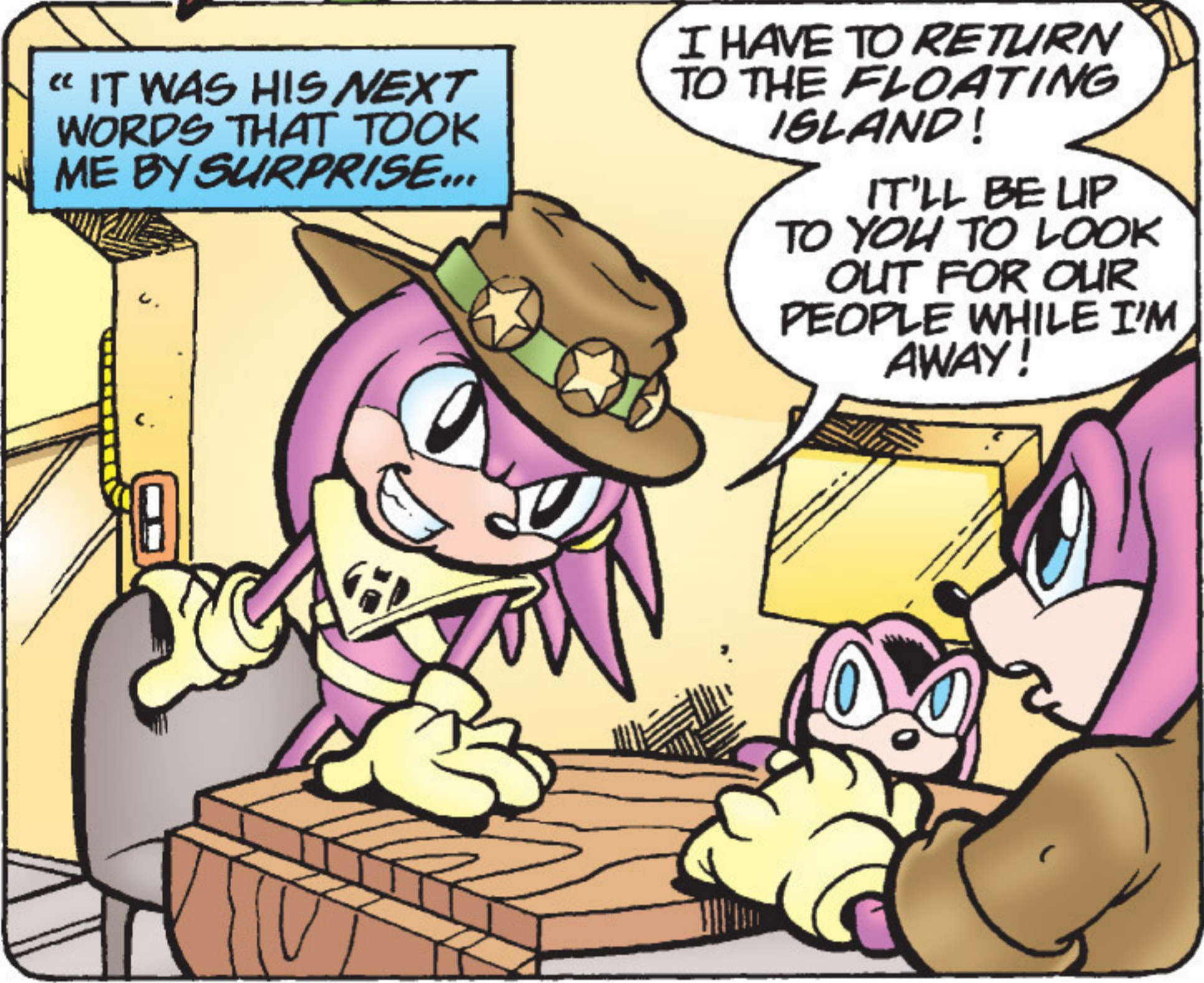
I WAS A MERE LAD OF TWENTY--NOT MUCH OLDER THAN YOU, I IMAGINE-- WHEN MY FATHER, HAWKING, HAD APPOINTED ME GUARDIAN IN HIS STEAD...



TOBOR, IT'S TIME YOU BECAME GUARDIAN!

YOU'VE PROVEN YOURSELF WORTHY OF THE TITLE!

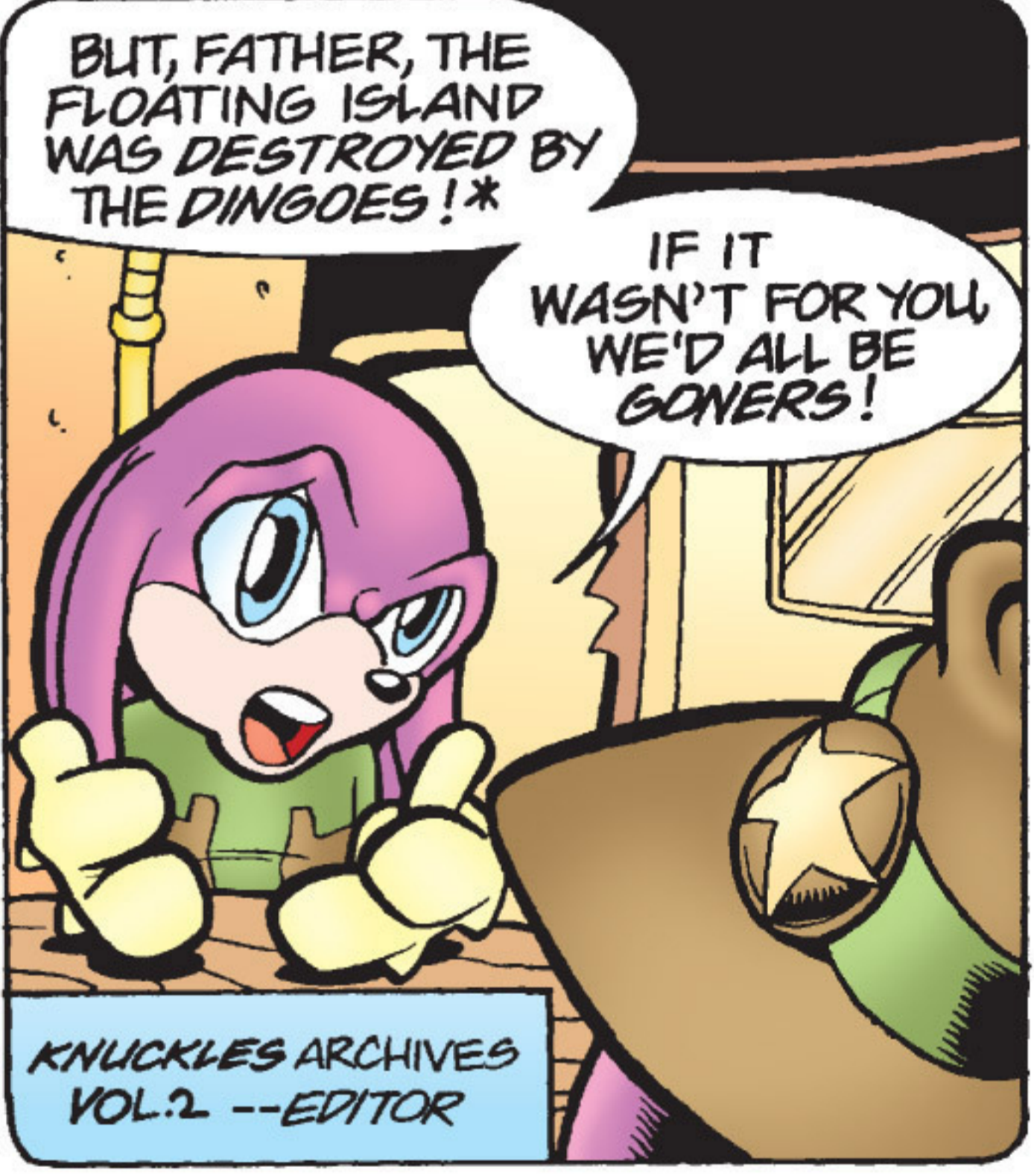
"YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN MOTHER AND VONI-CA! THEY WERE SO PROUD!"



"IT WAS HIS NEXT WORDS THAT TOOK ME BY SURPRISE..."

I HAVE TO RETURN TO THE FLOATING ISLAND!

IT'LL BE UP TO YOU TO LOOK OUT FOR OUR PEOPLE WHILE I'M AWAY!



BUT, FATHER, THE FLOATING ISLAND WAS DESTROYED BY THE DINGOES!*

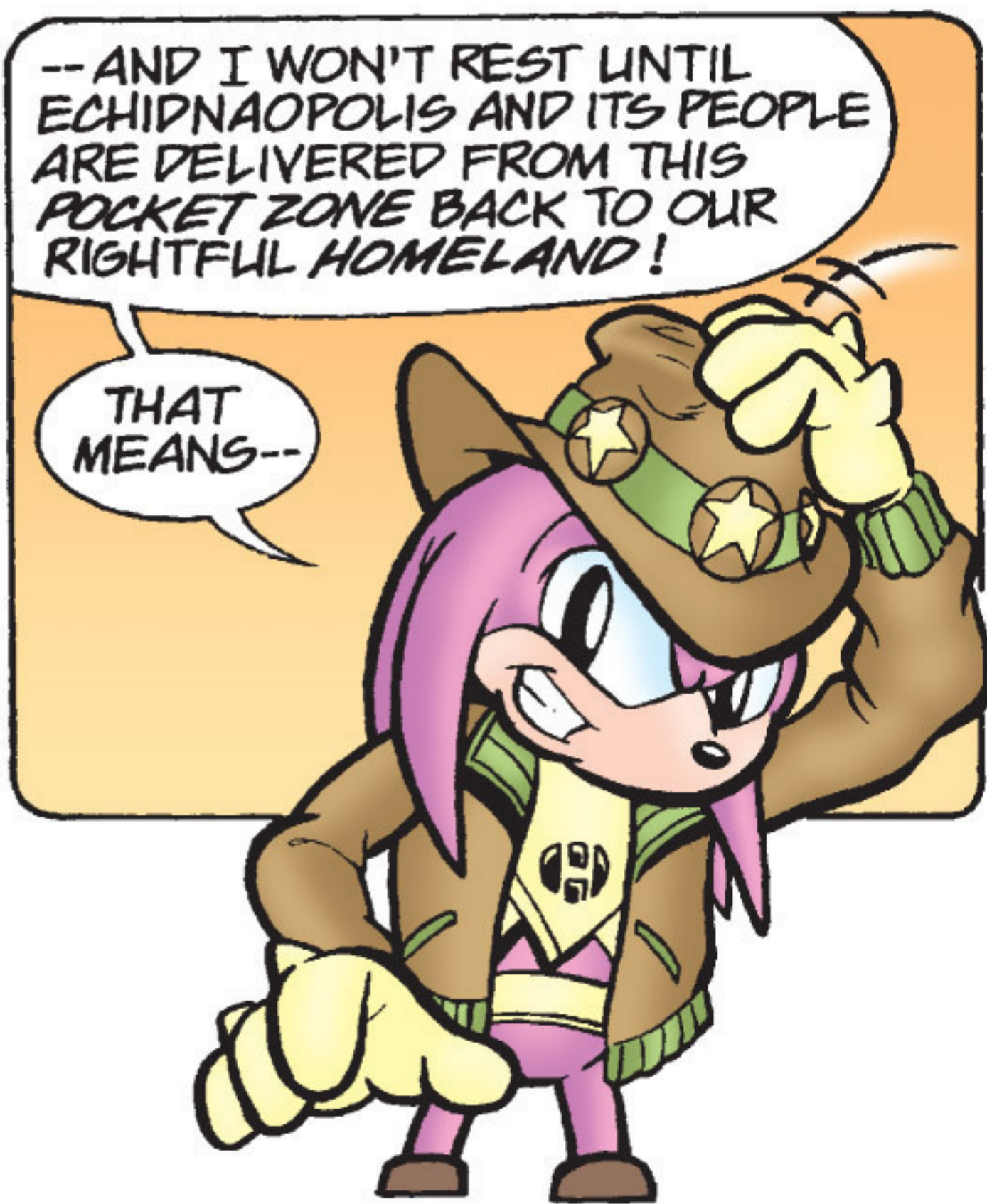
IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU, WE'D ALL BE GONERS!

KNUCKLES ARCHIVES VOL.2 --EDITOR



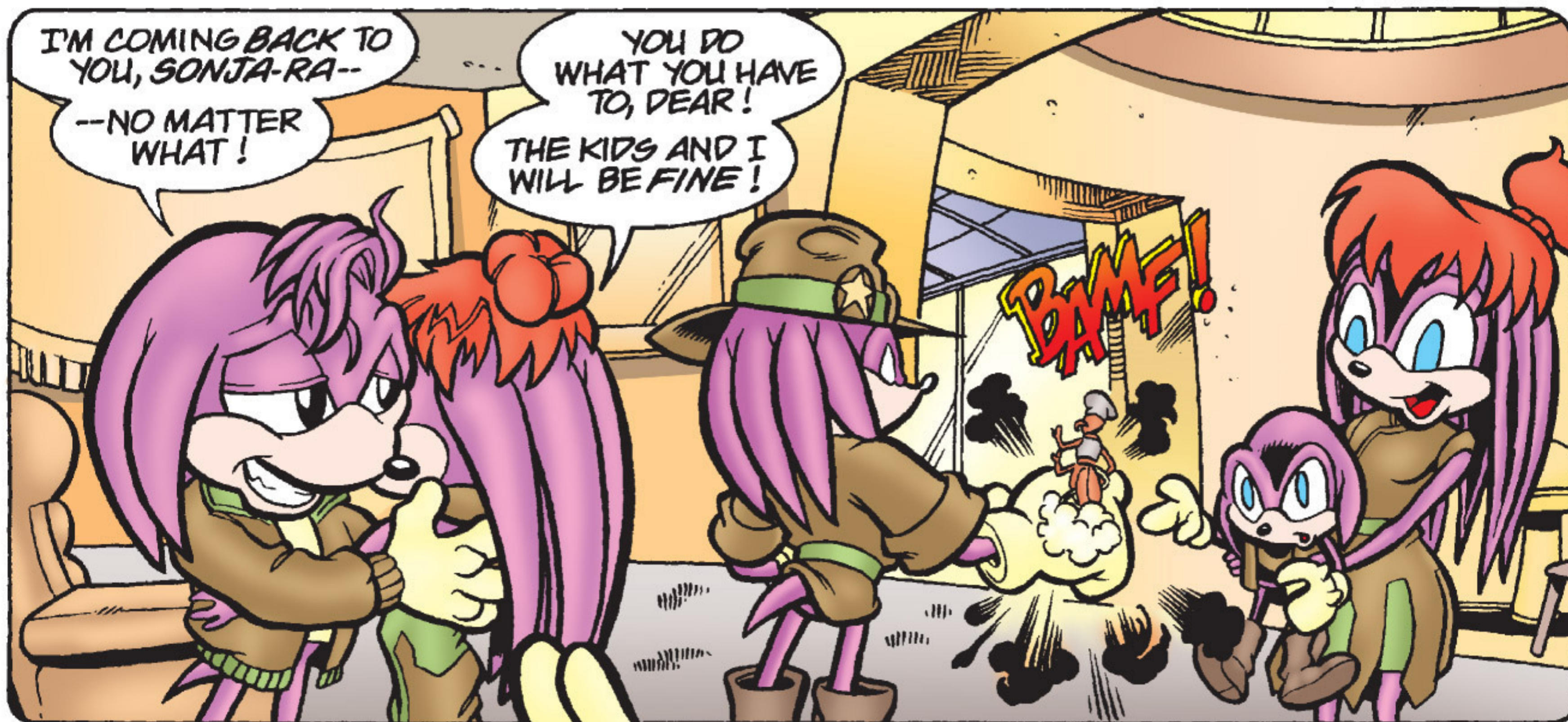
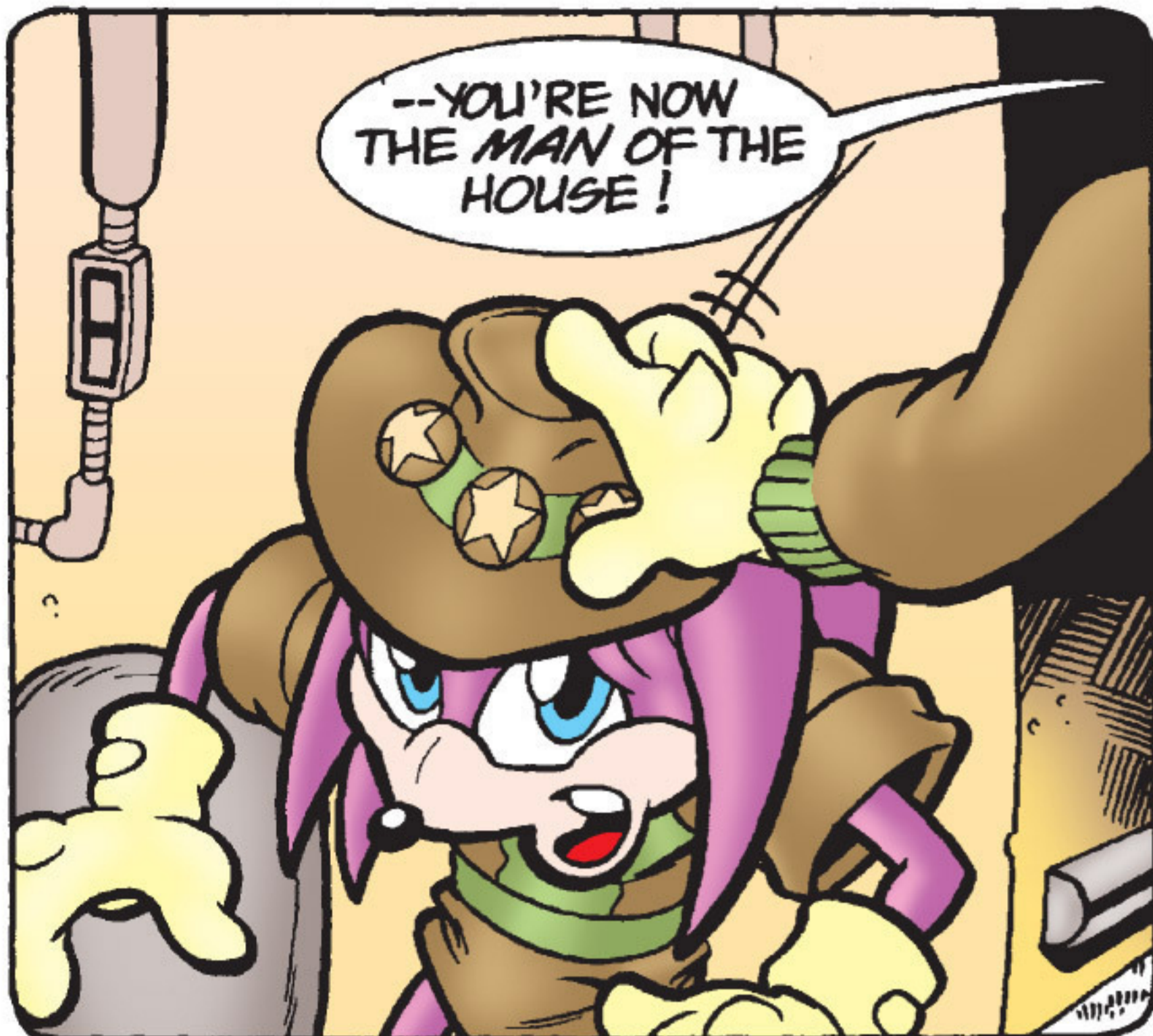
THE FLOATING ISLAND WAS DEVASTATED, TOBOR-- BUT NOT DESTROYED!

IT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY TO RESTORE IT--



-- AND I WON'T REST UNTIL ECHIDNAOPOLIS AND ITS PEOPLE ARE DELIVERED FROM THIS POCKET ZONE BACK TO OUR RIGHTFUL HOMELAND!

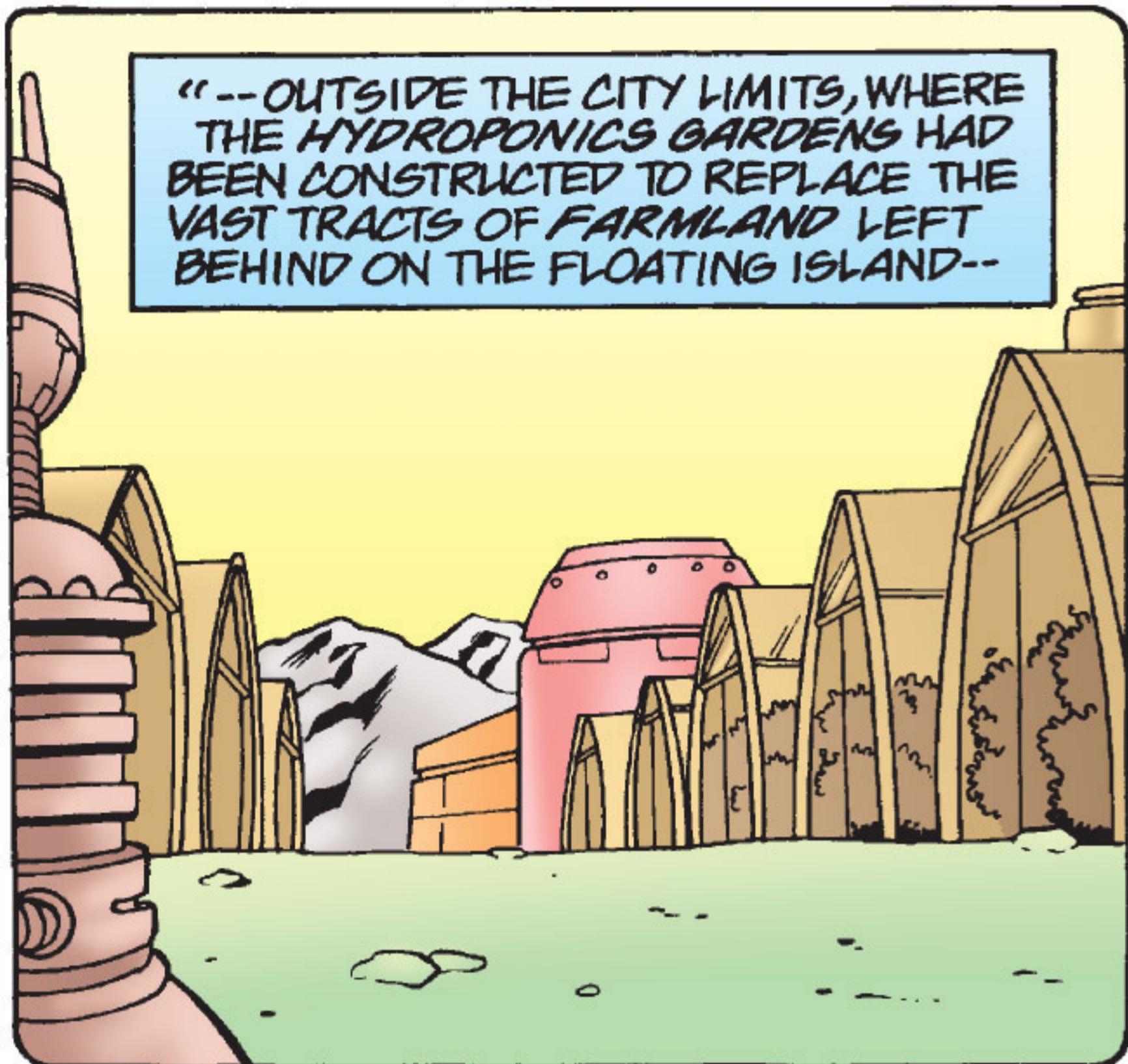
THAT MEANS--



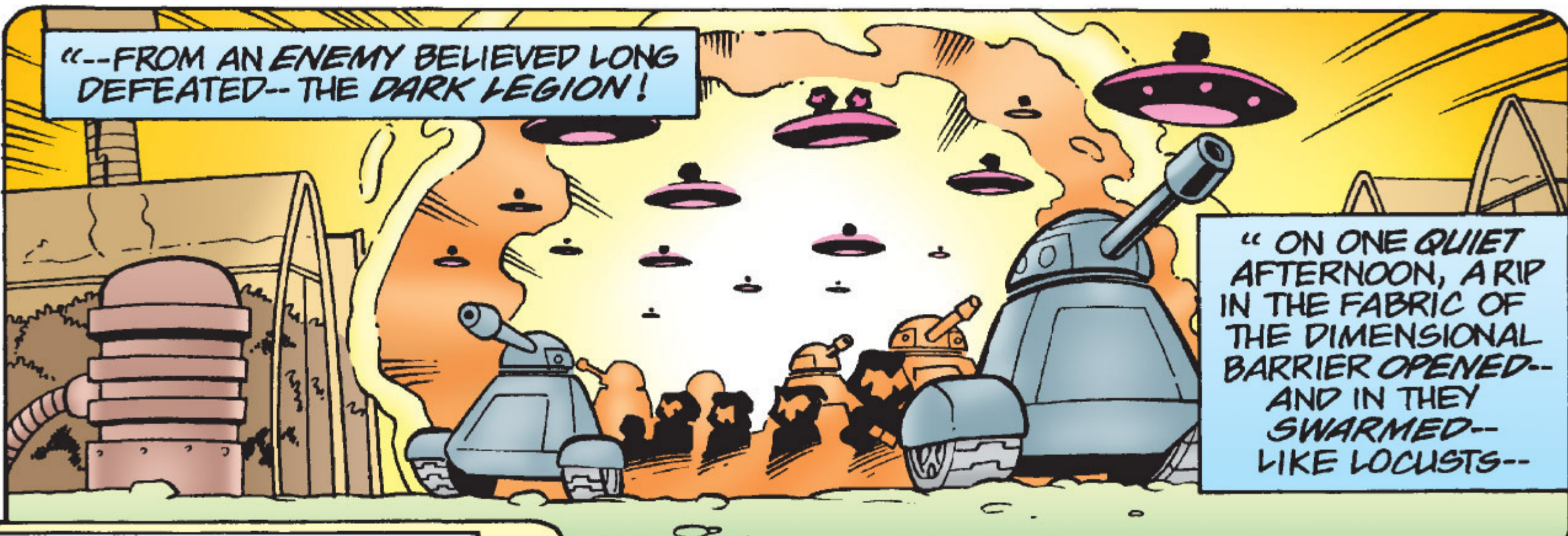


"--AND MY LIFE AS A GUARDIAN BEGAN!

" IT WOULDN'T BE LONG BEFORE I EXPERIENCED MY BAPTISM OF FIRE--



"--OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS, WHERE THE HYDROPONICS GARDENS HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED TO REPLACE THE VAST TRACTS OF FARMLAND LEFT BEHIND ON THE FLOATING ISLAND--



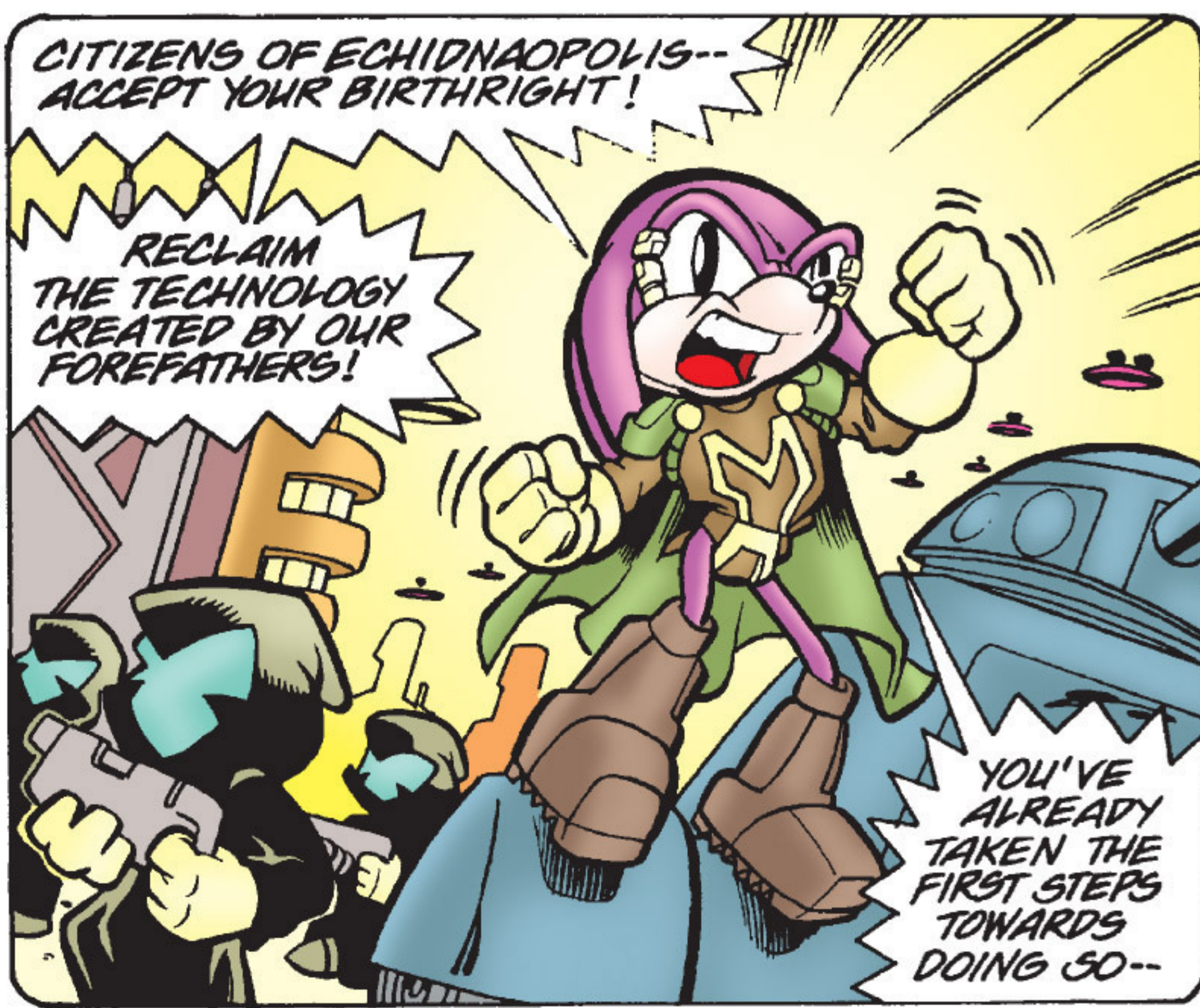
"--FROM AN ENEMY BELIEVED LONG DEFEATED-- THE DARK LEGION!

" ON ONE QUIET AFTERNOON, A RIP IN THE FABRIC OF THE DIMENSIONAL BARRIER OPENED-- AND IN THEY SWARMED-- LIKE LOCUSTS--



--LED BY THEIR LEADER-- AN EVIL LEGIONNAIRE WHO CALLED HIMSELF--

--MORITORI REX!"



CITIZENS OF ECHIDNAOPOLIS-- ACCEPT YOUR BIRTHRIGHT!

RECLAIM THE TECHNOLOGY CREATED BY OUR FOREFATHERS!

YOU'VE ALREADY TAKEN THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS DOING SO--



--NOW FINISH THE JOB!

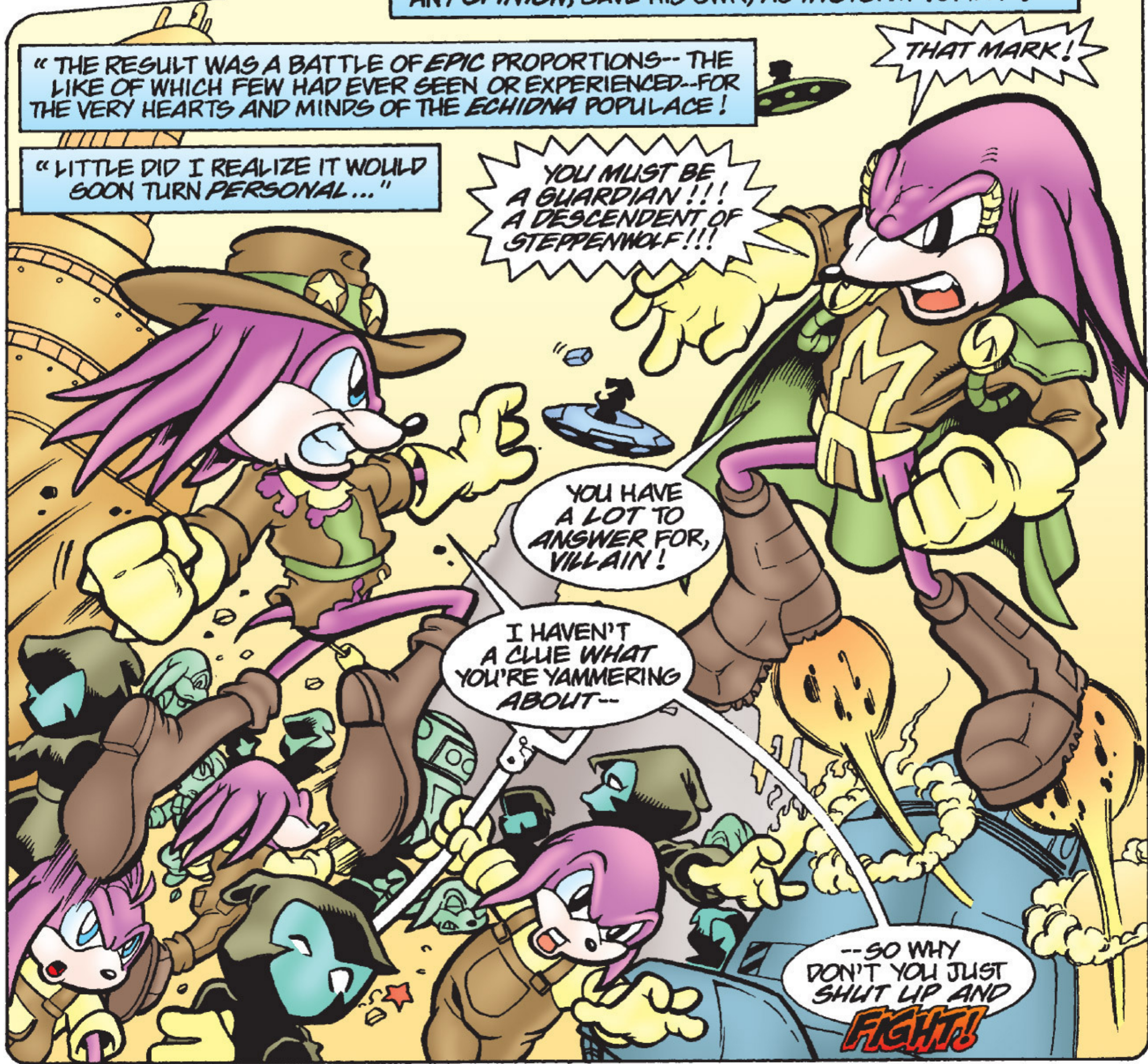
NO!



OUR PEOPLE SUPPORTED THE DECISION TO RENOUNCE TECHNOLOGY!

IT'S NOT YOUR PLACE TO FORCE YOUR VIEWS UPON US!

"IT WAS POINTLESS TO ARGUE. MORITORI REX REGARDED ANY OPINION, SAVE HIS OWN, AS INSIGNIFICANT!



"THE RESULT WAS A BATTLE OF EPIC PROPORTIONS-- THE LIKE OF WHICH FEW HAD EVER SEEN OR EXPERIENCED--FOR THE VERY HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE ECHIDNA POPULACE!

"LITTLE DID I REALIZE IT WOULD SOON TURN PERSONAL..."

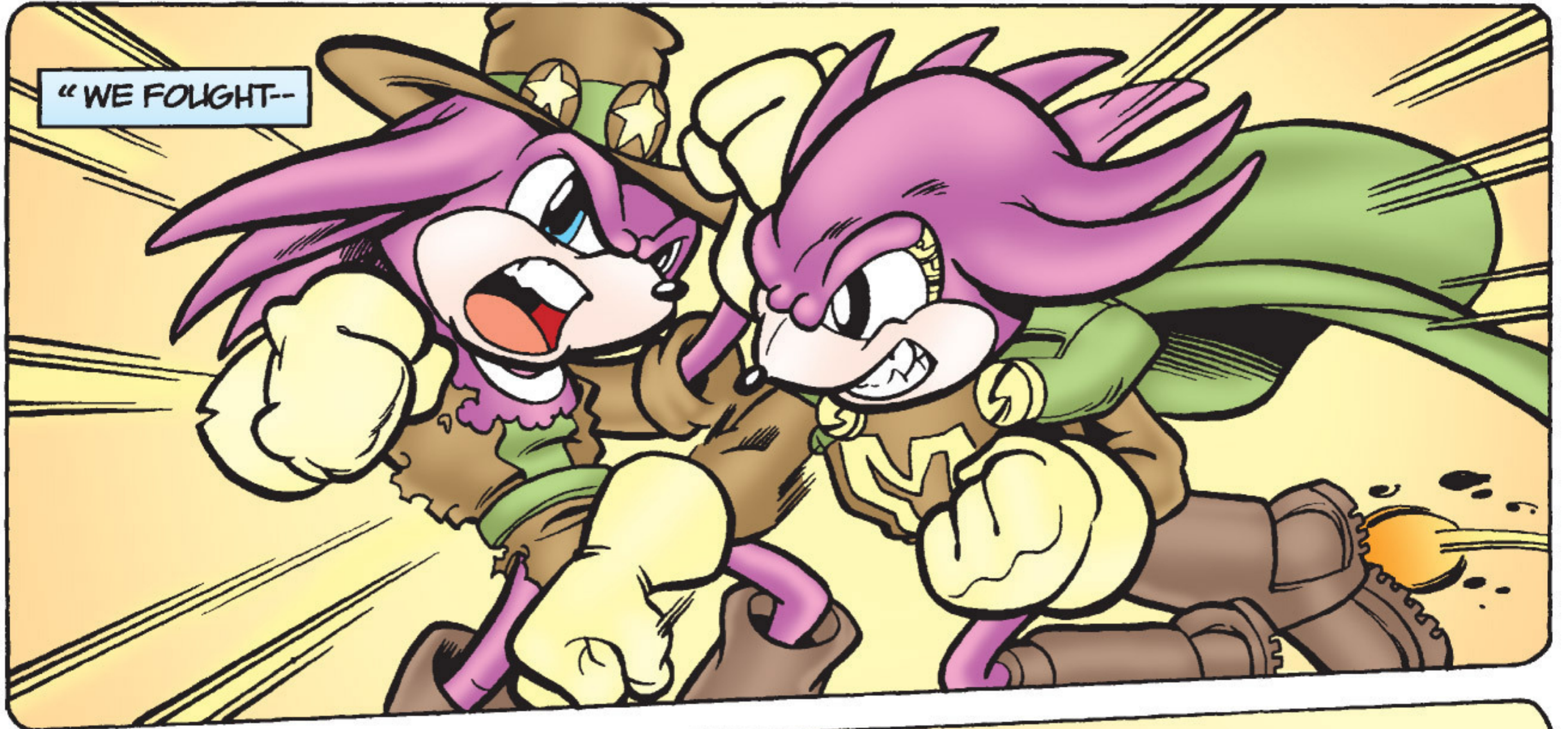
YOU MUST BE A GUARDIAN!!! A DESCENDENT OF STEPPENWOLF!!!

THAT MARK!

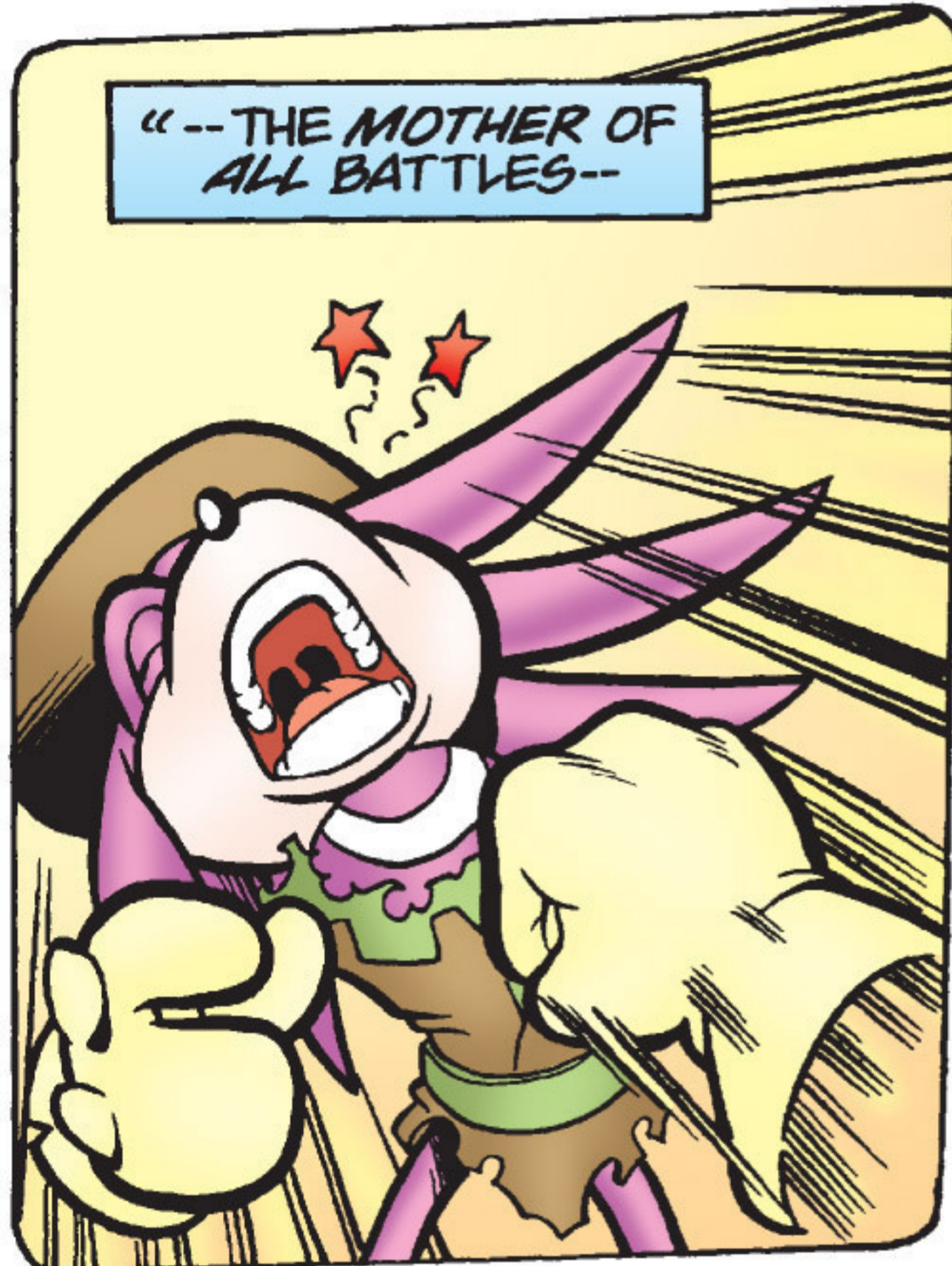
YOU HAVE A LOT TO ANSWER FOR, VILLAIN!

I HAVEN'T A CLUE WHAT YOU'RE YAMMERING ABOUT--

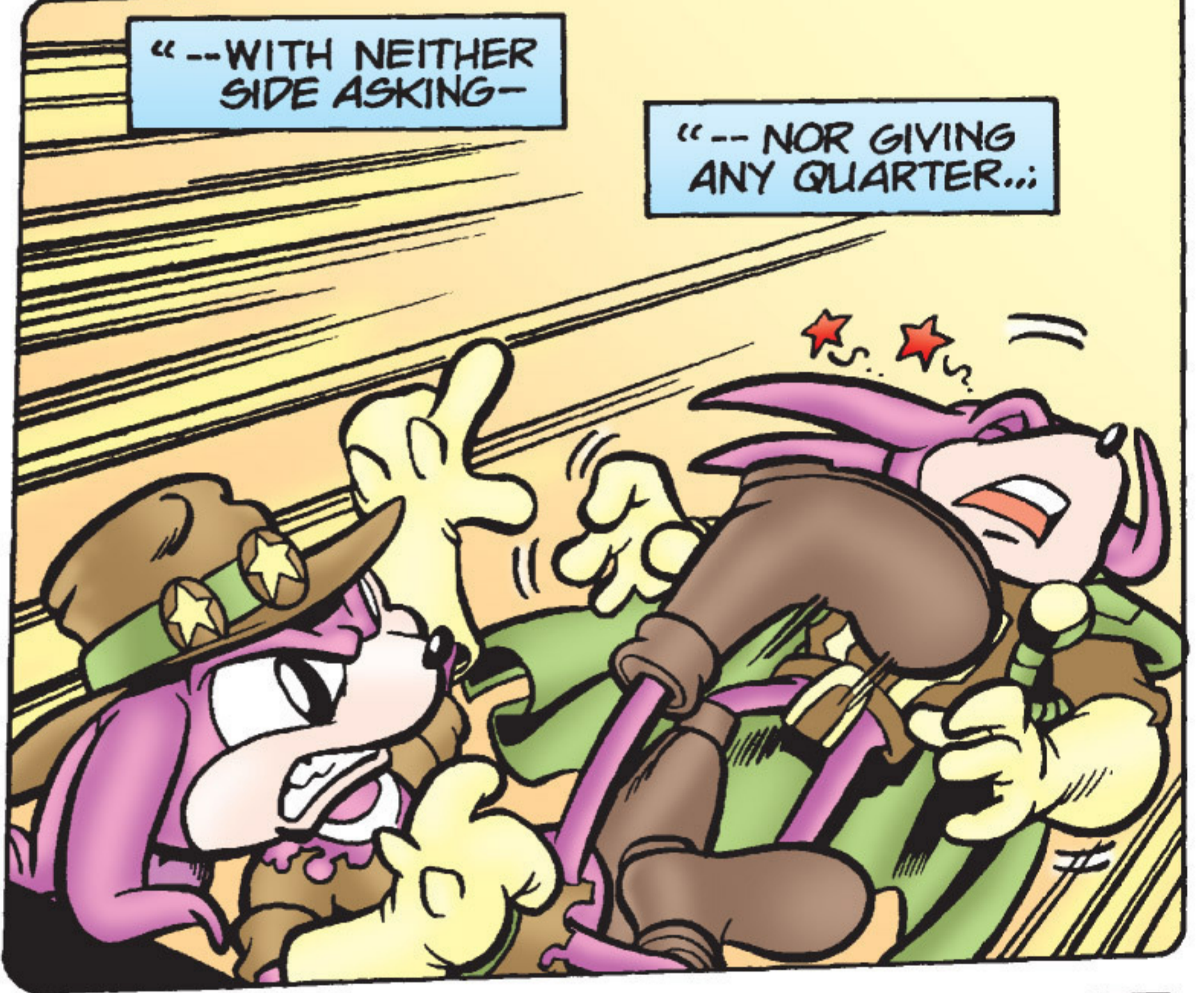
--SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST SHUT UP AND **FIGHT!**



"WE FOUGHT--



"--THE MOTHER OF ALL BATTLES--

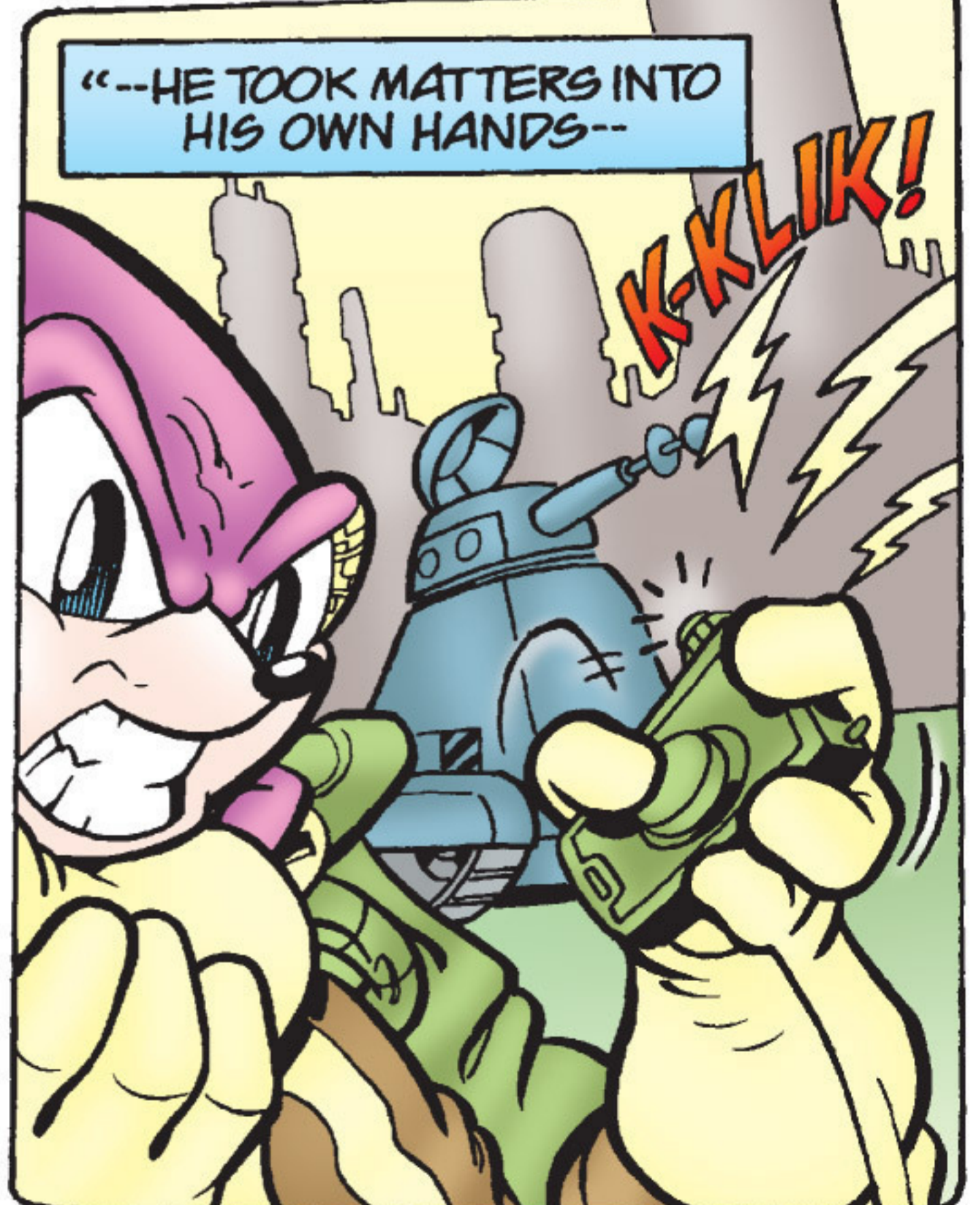


"--WITH NEITHER SIDE ASKING--

"--NOR GIVING ANY QUARTER..:

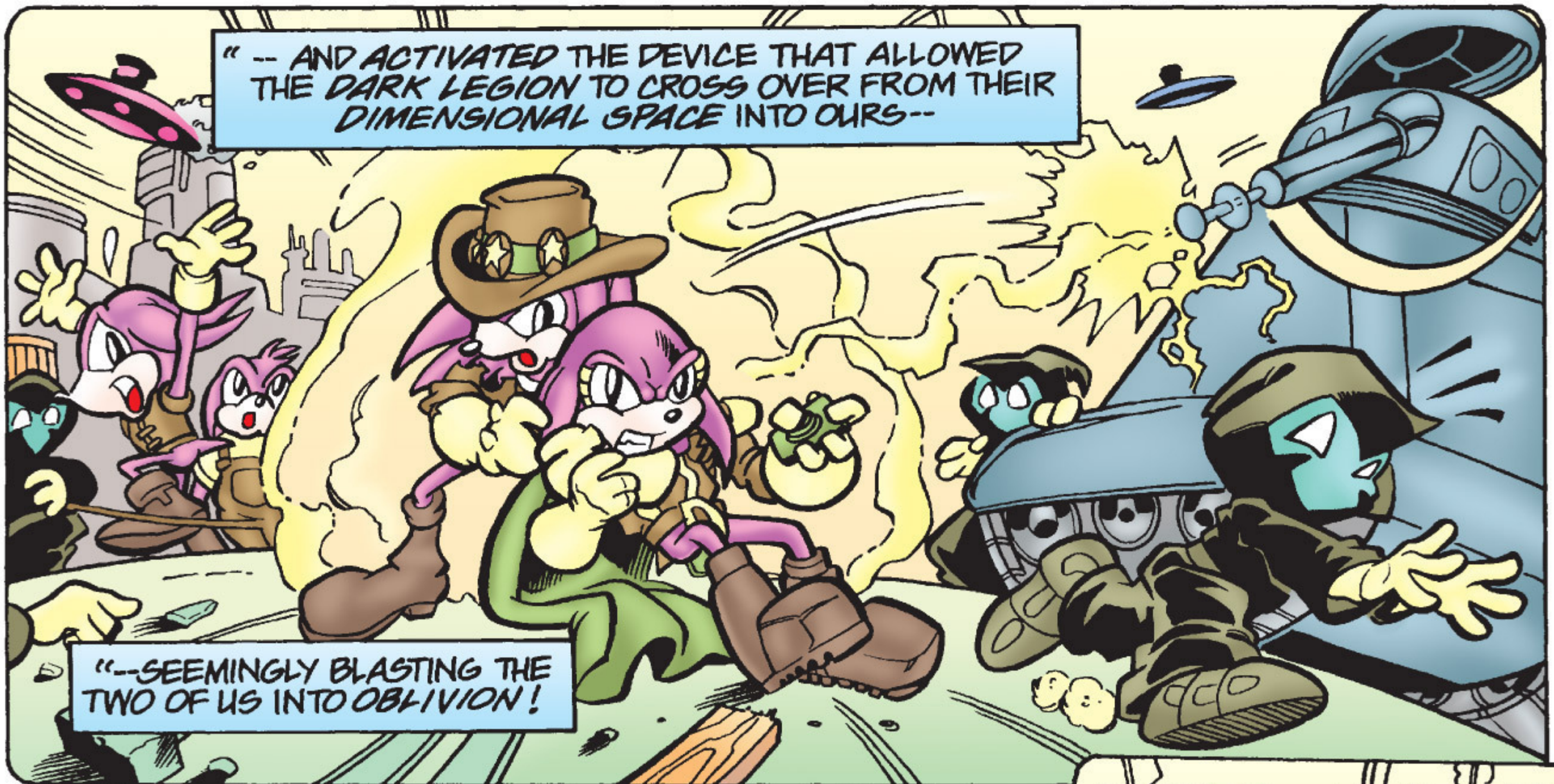


"AND JUST WHEN MORITORI REX STARED INTO THE JAWS OF DEFEAT--



"--HE TOOK MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS--

K-KLIK!



" -- AND ACTIVATED THE DEVICE THAT ALLOWED THE DARK LEGION TO CROSS OVER FROM THEIR DIMENSIONAL SPACE INTO OURS--

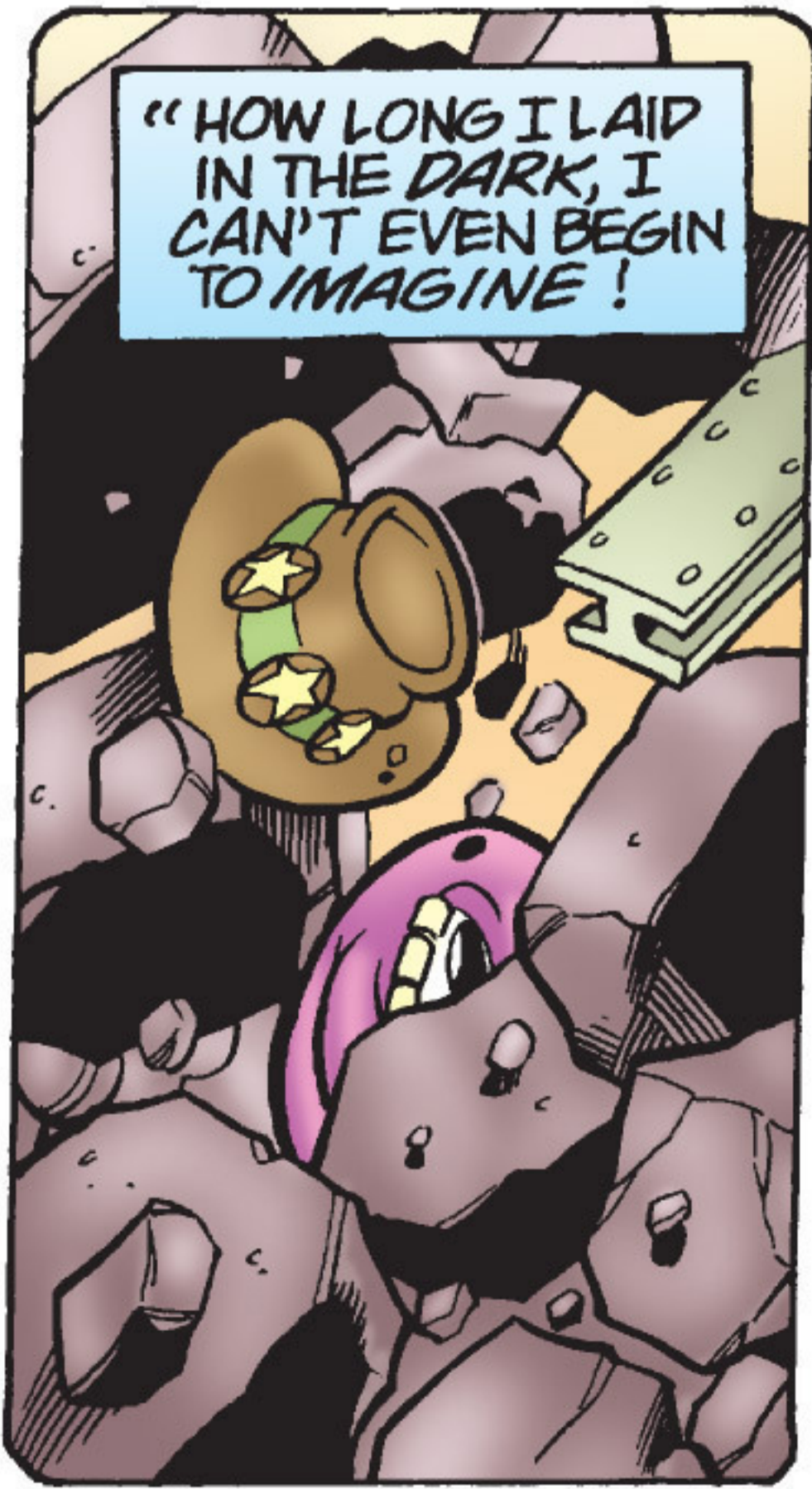
"--SEEMINGLY BLASTING THE TWO OF US INTO OBLIVION!



" AS IT TURNED OUT, OBLIVION WAS LOCATED SOMEWHERE ON THE FLOATING ISLAND--



" --WHERE WE FOUND OURSELVES CONFRONTED WITH ANCIENT RUINS COLLAPSING ON US...



" HOW LONG I LAID IN THE DARK, I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE !

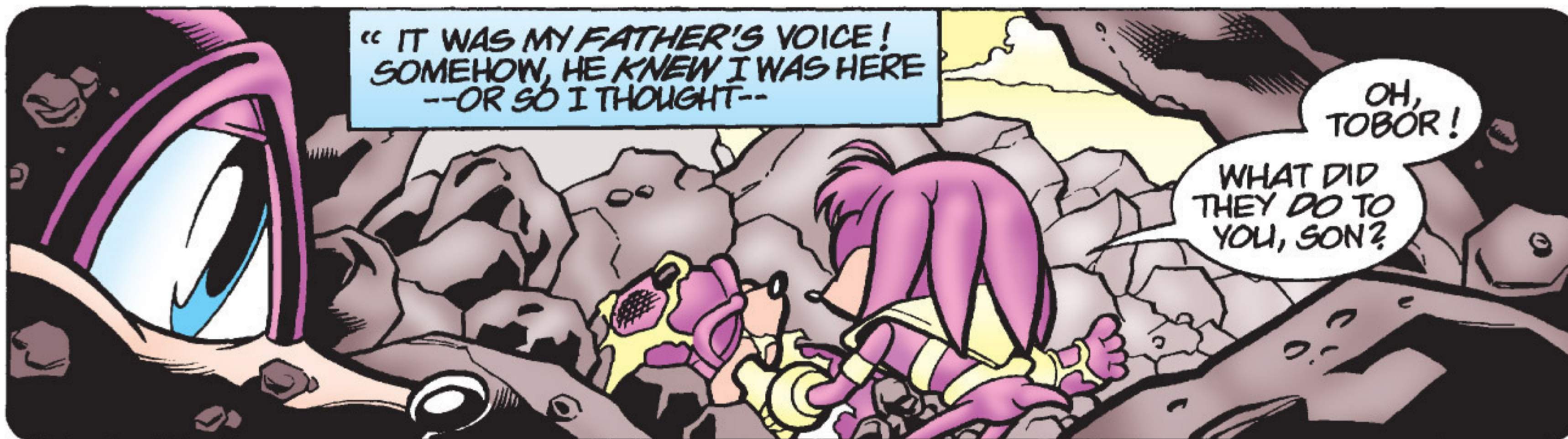


"AT FIRST, I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD--



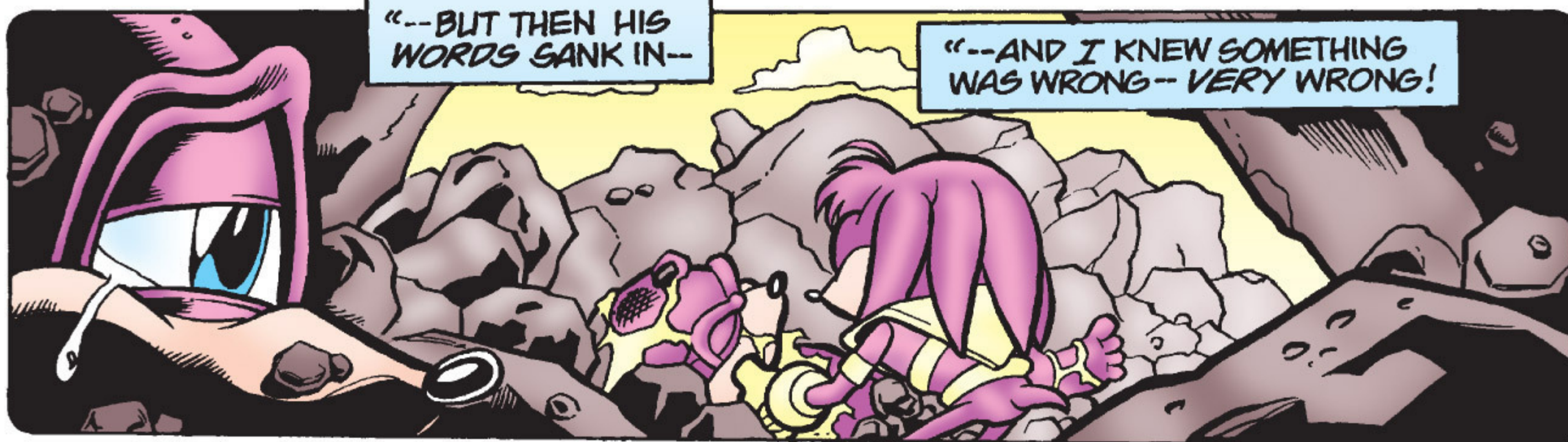
"--THEN I AWOKE--
STARTLED OUT OF
MY STUPOR BY A
FAMILIAR SOUND..."

TOBOR!!
TOBOR!!!



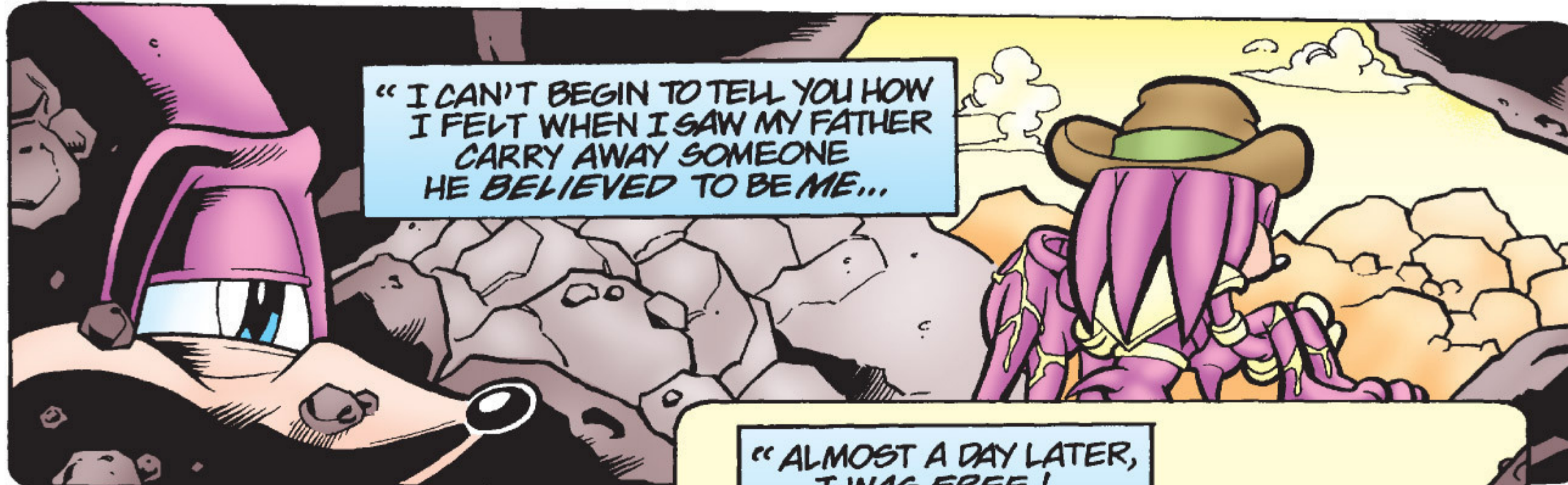
"IT WAS MY FATHER'S VOICE!
SOMEHOW, HE KNEW I WAS HERE
--OR SO I THOUGHT--"

OH,
TOBOR!
WHAT DID
THEY DO TO
YOU, SON?



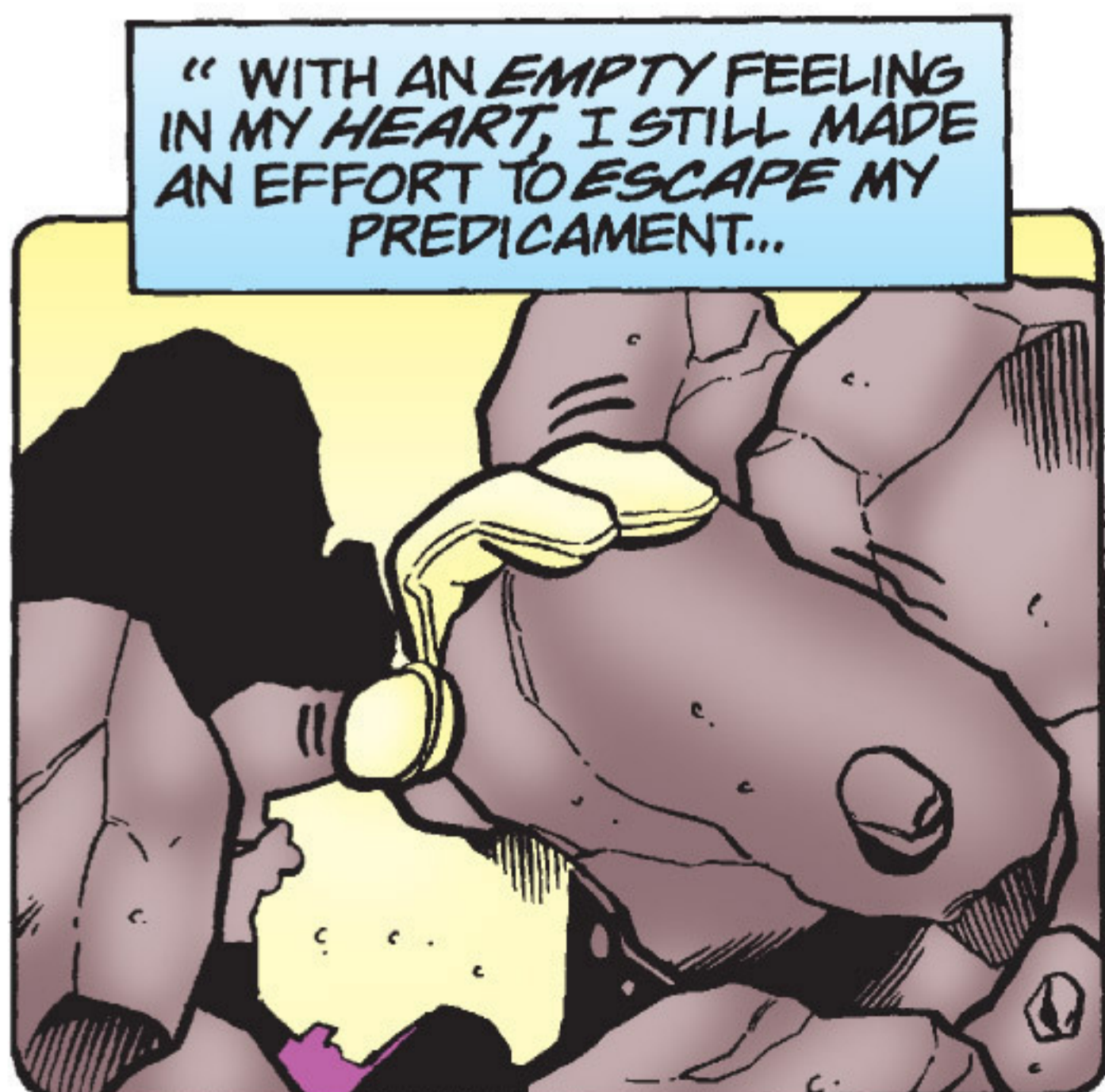
"--BUT THEN HIS
WORDS SANK IN--"

"--AND I KNEW SOMETHING
WAS WRONG-- VERY WRONG!"

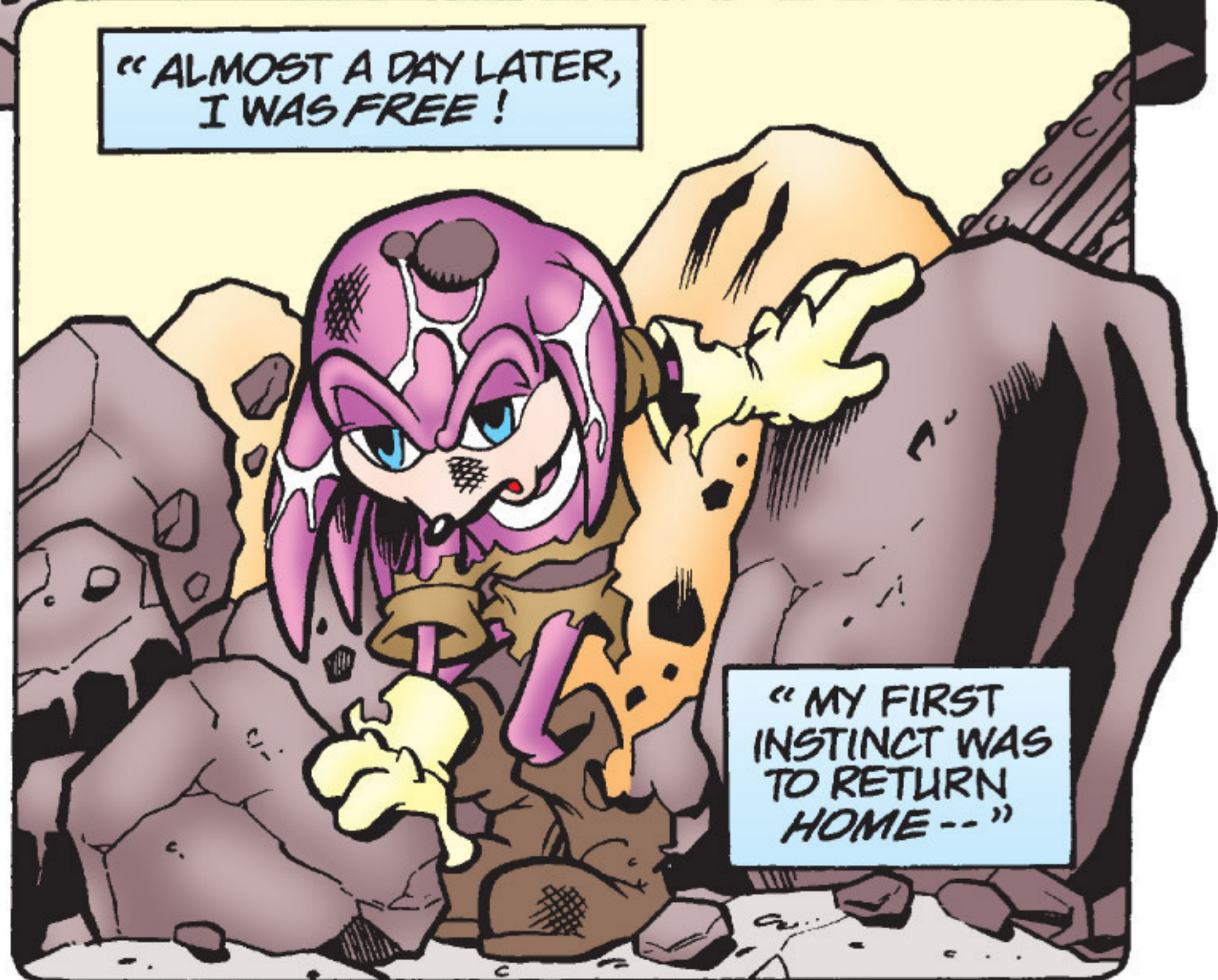


"I CAN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU HOW
I FELT WHEN I SAW MY FATHER
CARRY AWAY SOMEONE
HE BELIEVED TO BE ME..."

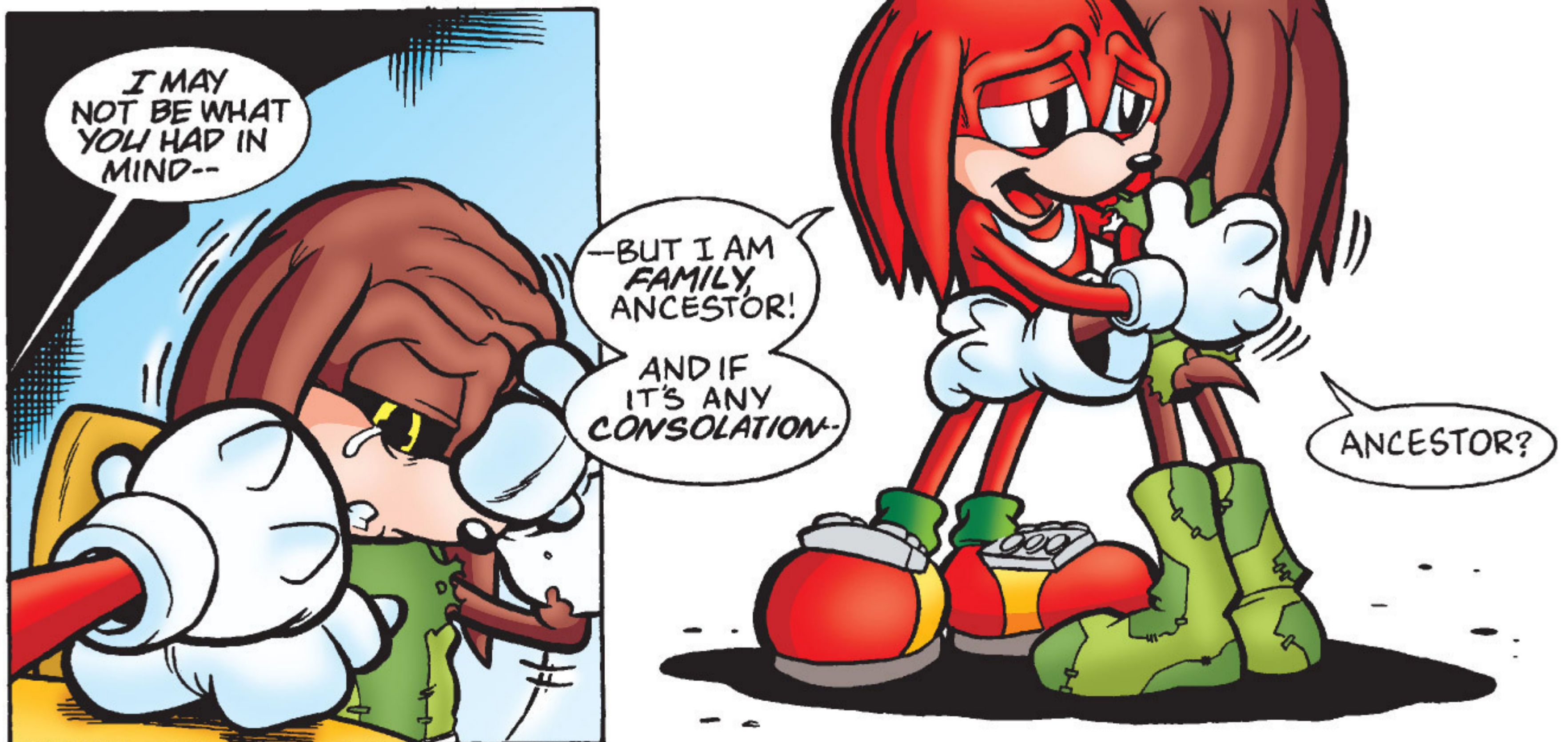
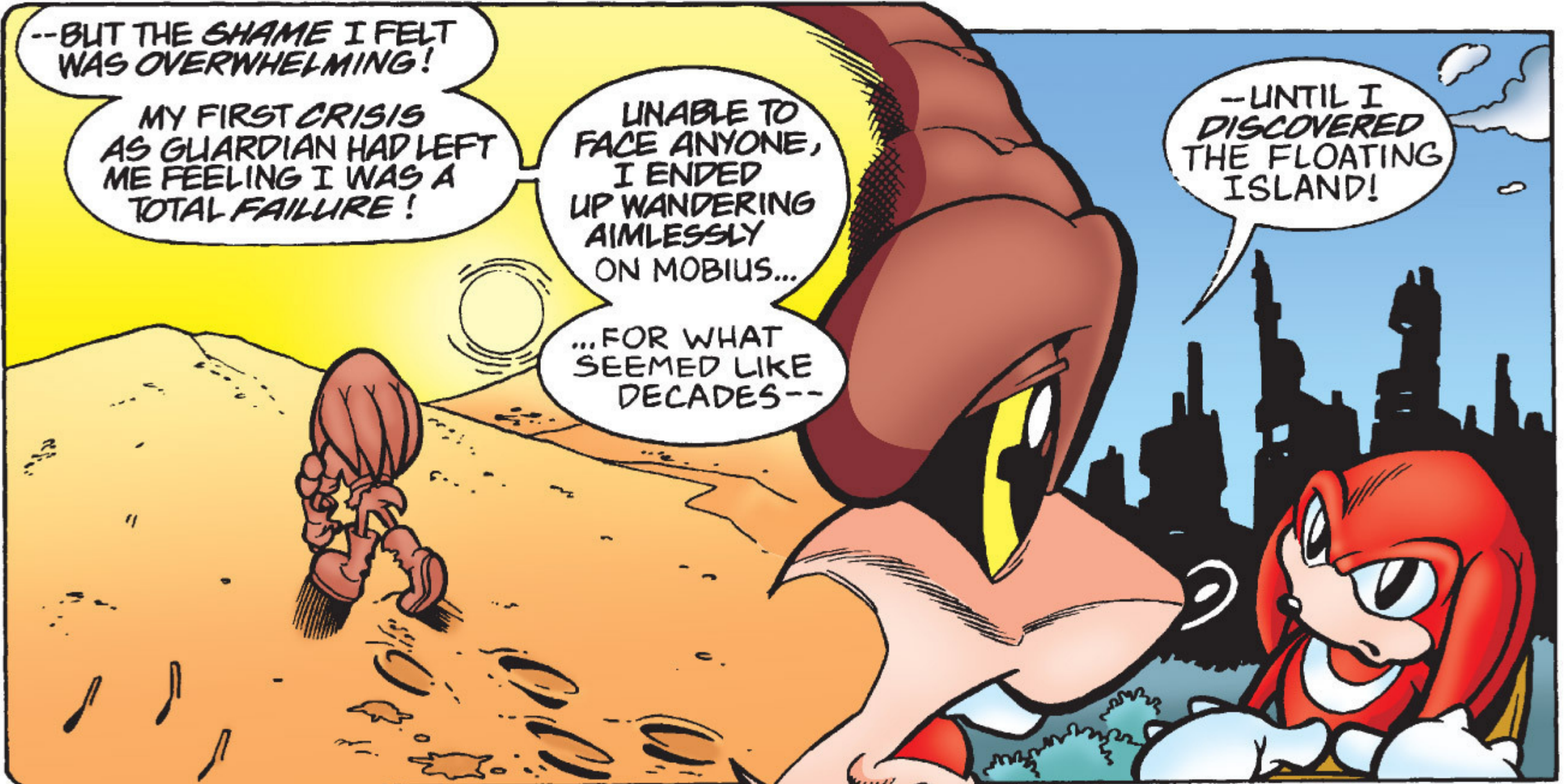
"ALMOST A DAY LATER,
I WAS FREE!"

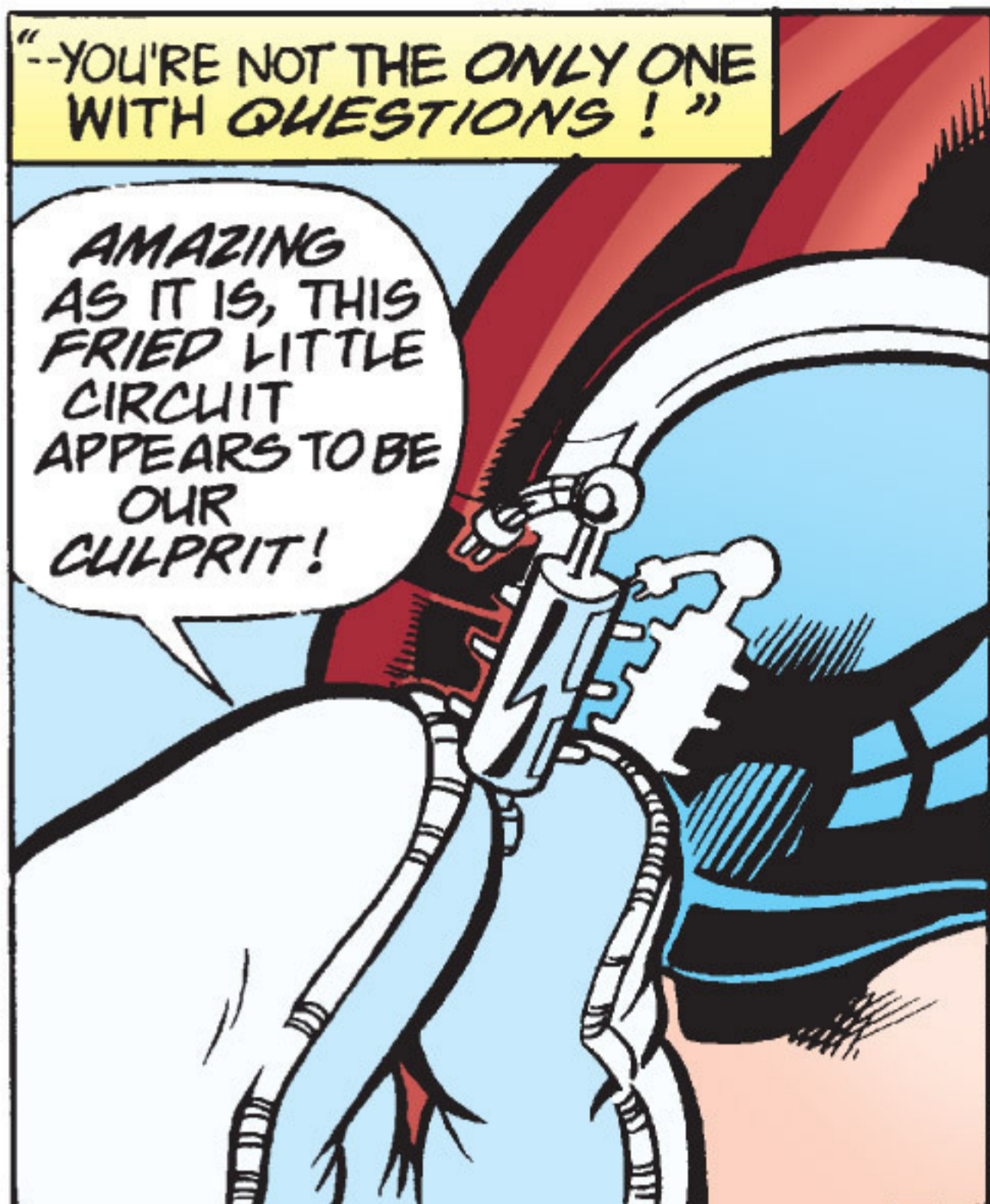


"WITH AN EMPTY FEELING
IN MY HEART, I STILL MADE
AN EFFORT TO ESCAPE MY
PREDICAMENT..."



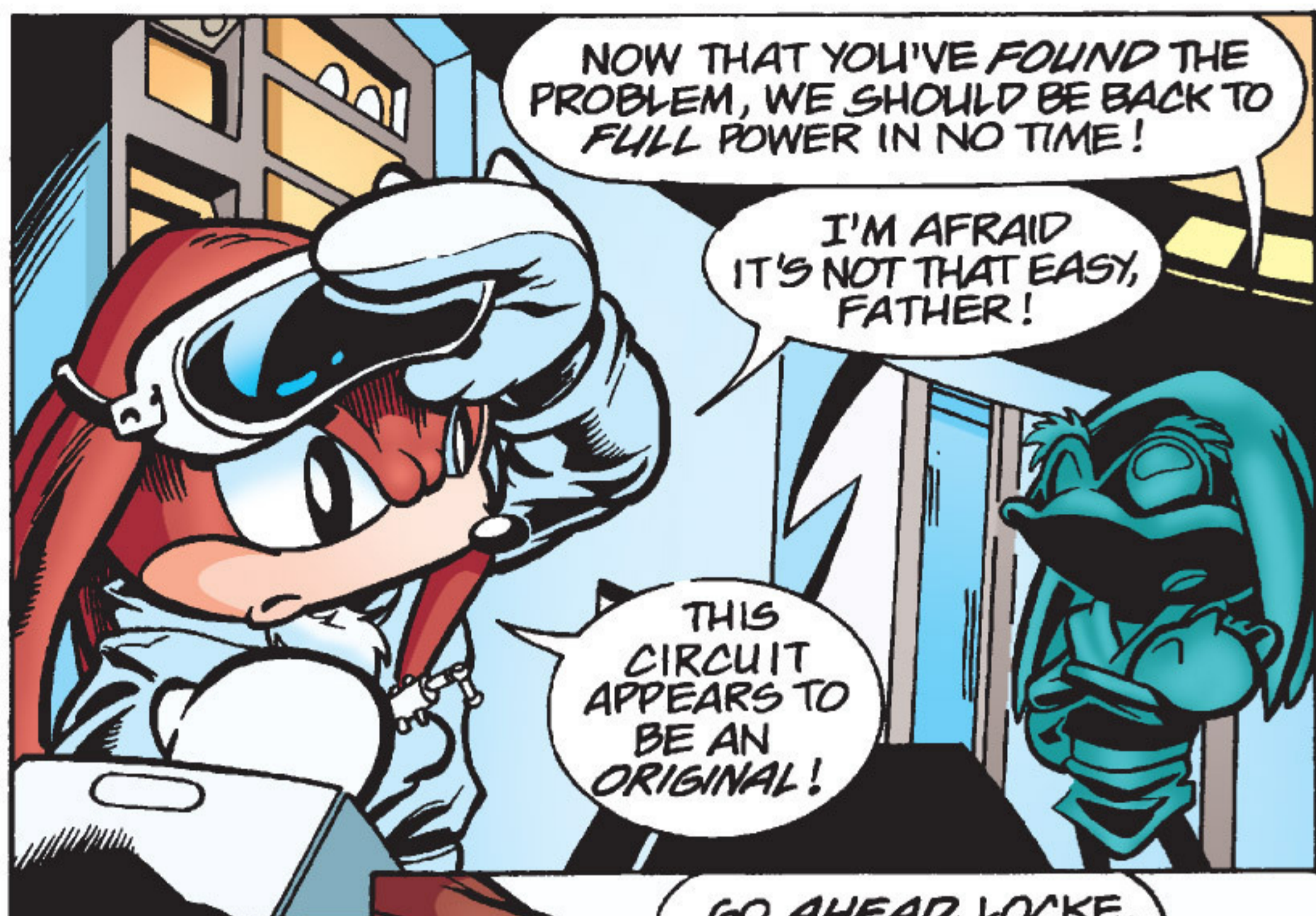
"MY FIRST
INSTINCT WAS
TO RETURN
HOME --"





"--YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH QUESTIONS!"

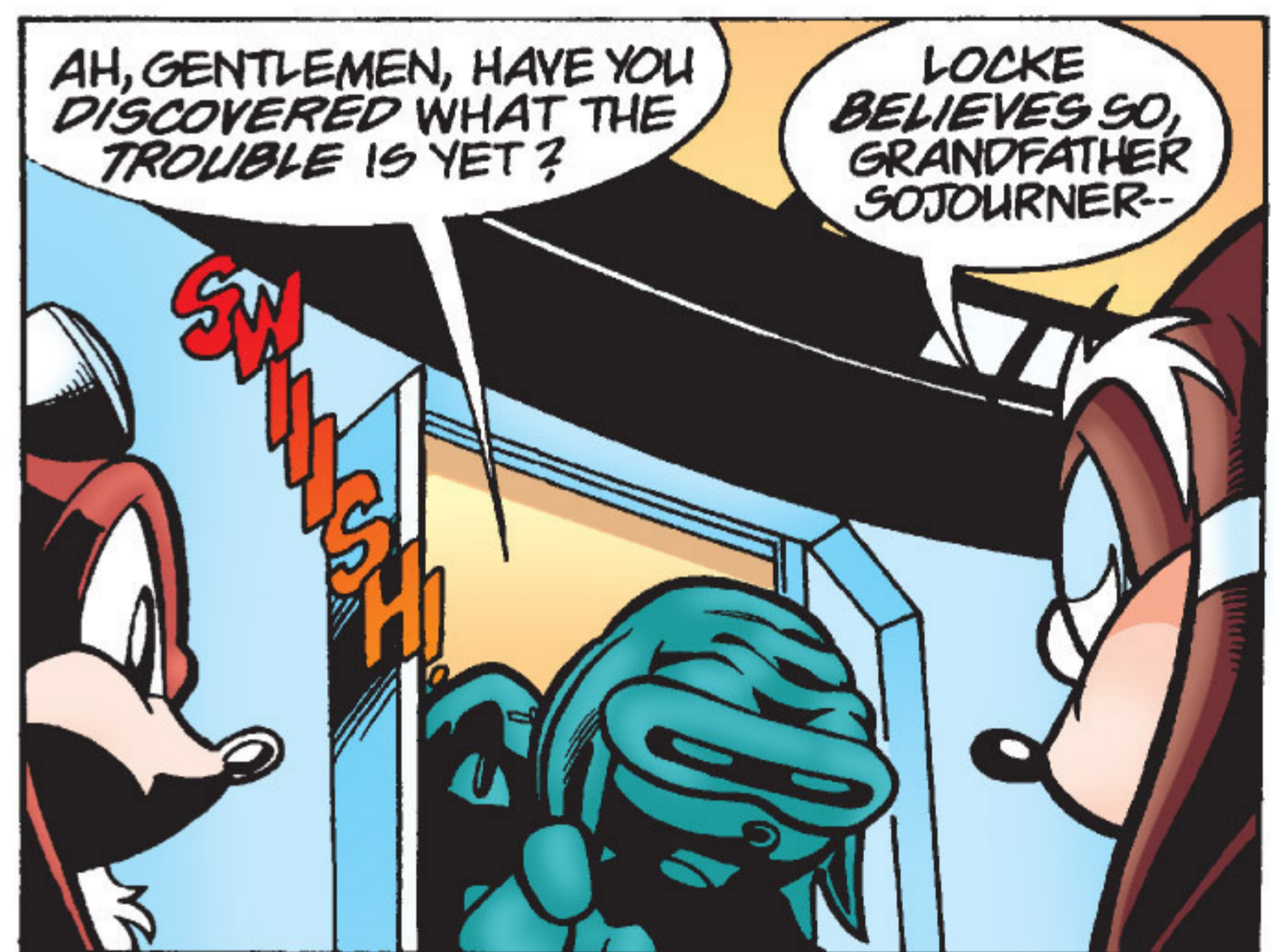
AMAZING AS IT IS, THIS FRIED LITTLE CIRCUIT APPEARS TO BE OUR CULPRIT!



NOW THAT YOU'VE FOUND THE PROBLEM, WE SHOULD BE BACK TO FULL POWER IN NO TIME!

I'M AFRAID IT'S NOT THAT EASY, FATHER!

THIS CIRCUIT APPEARS TO BE AN ORIGINAL!



AH, GENTLEMEN, HAVE YOU DISCOVERED WHAT THE TROUBLE IS YET?

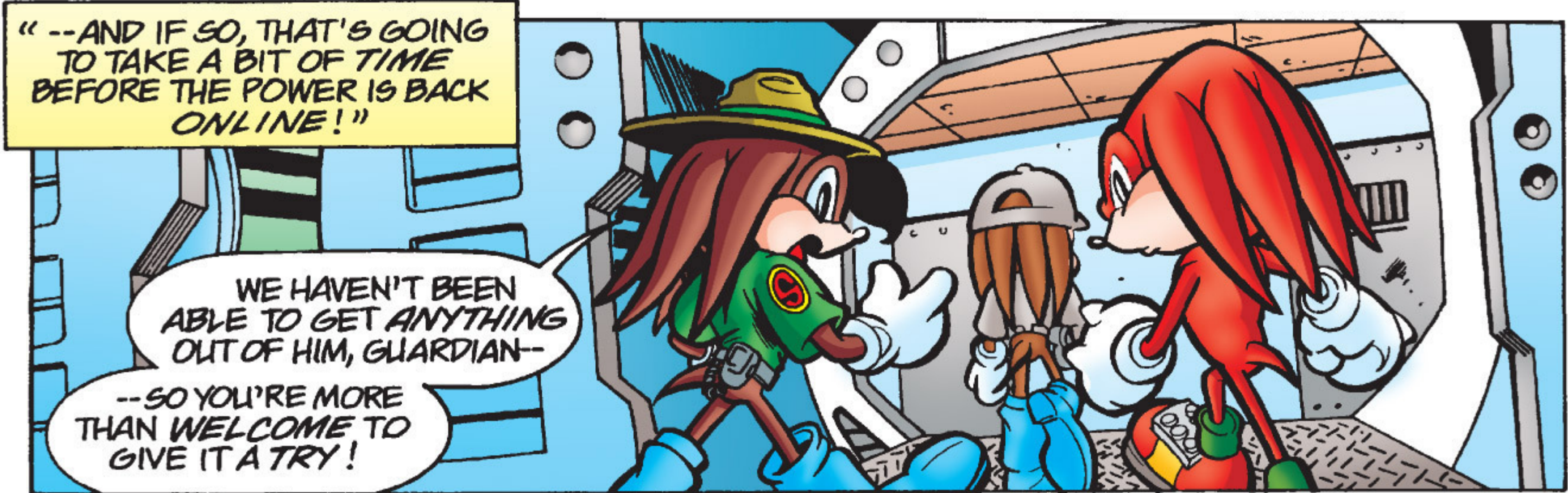
LOCKE BELIEVES SO, GRANDFATHER SOJOURNER--

SWISH!



GO AHEAD, LOCKE, WE'RE ALL EARS!

I'M NOT SURE IF WE HAVE A REPLACEMENT PART! WE MAY HAVE TO RECONSTRUCT A NEW ONE FROM SCRATCH--



"--AND IF SO, THAT'S GOING TO TAKE A BIT OF TIME BEFORE THE POWER IS BACK ONLINE!"

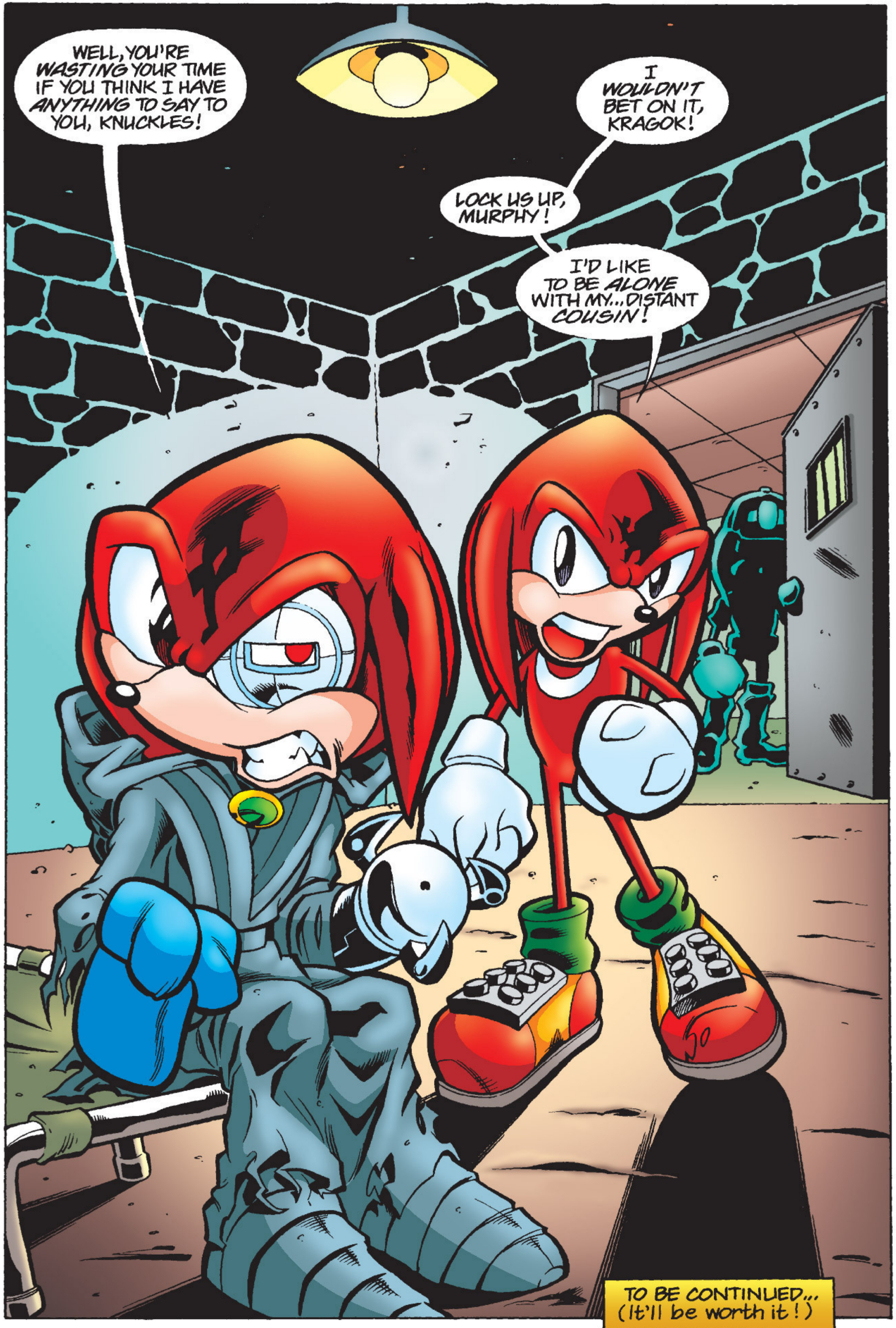
WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET ANYTHING OUT OF HIM, GUARDIAN--

--SO YOU'RE MORE THAN WELCOME TO GIVE IT A TRY!



ALRIGHT, MURPHY, OPEN IT UP!

SO YOU FINALLY DECIDED TO SEE ME, EH?



WELL, YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME IF YOU THINK I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO YOU, KNUCKLES!

I WOULDN'T BET ON IT, KRAGOK!

LOCK US UP, MURPHY!

I'D LIKE TO BE ALONE WITH MY...DISTANT COUSIN!

TO BE CONTINUED... (It'll be worth it!)